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Contents

Addresses and Remarks

See also Bill Signings; Meetings With Foreign Leaders
Maryland
Bush-Cheney luncheon in Baltimore—1752
Home Depot, discussion with employers and employees in Halethorpe—1756
Michigan
Bush-Cheney luncheon in Dearborn—1719
Dynamic Metal Treating, Inc., discussion with employers and employees in Canton—1724
National Christmas tree lighting—1748
New Jersey, Bush-Cheney reception in Whippany—1728
Pennsylvania, Bush-Cheney luncheon in Pittsburgh—1735
Radio address—1719
2003 NASCAR drivers, remarks honoring—1740

Appointments and Nominations

President's Personal Envoy on Iraqi Debt Resolution, statement—1760

Bill Signings

Adoption Promotion Act of 2003, remarks—1734
Energy and Water Development Appropriations Act, 2004, statement—1732
Fair and Accurate Credit Transactions Act of 2003, remarks—1746

Bill Signings—Continued

Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003, remarks—1741
21st Century Nanotechnology Research and Development Act, statement—1744

Interviews With the News Media

Exchange with reporters in the Oval Office—1744

Meetings With Foreign Leaders

Jordan, King Abdullah II—1744

Proclamations

To Provide for the Termination of Action Taken With Regard to Imports of Certain Steel Products—1750
World AIDS Day—1733

Statements by the President

See also Appointments and Nominations; Bill Signings
Proclamation To Provide for the Termination of Action Taken With Regard to Imports of Certain Steel Products—1749

Supplementary Materials

Acts approved by the President—1763
Checklist of White House press releases—1762
Digest of other White House announcements—1761
Nominations submitted to the Senate—1762

WEEKLY COMPILATION OF

PRESIDENTIAL DOCUMENTS

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The President's Radio Address

November 29, 2003

Good morning. On Thursday, I was honored to travel to Iraq to spend Thanksgiving with some of the finest men and women serving in our military.

My message to the troops was clear: Your country is thankful for your service; we are proud of you; and America stands with you in all that you are doing to defend America. I'm pleased to report back from the frontlines that our troops are strong. Morale is high, and our military is confident we will prevail.

Many members of our Armed Forces, Guard, and Reserve observed Thanksgiving in places far from home. In Afghanistan, Iraq, and elsewhere, our military is confronting the terrorist enemy so we don't meet that enemy in our own country. They're serving the cause of freedom. They're helping millions of people in newly liberated countries to build lives of dignity and hope. They are protecting the lives and security of the American people. All of us can be grateful to live in a country that has produced such brave men and women who stand between us and the dangers of the world.

This holiday weekend is also a time when many proud military families are also feeling separation and worry. Long deployments in dangerous places have added hardships in military communities across the country. Many parents are dealing with the burdens of raising families while praying for the safe return of a loved one. Our whole Nation respects and appreciates the commitment and sacrifice of our military families.

Americans are also thinking of the military families that must face this holiday with sorrow of recent loss. It is the nature of terrorism that a small number of people can inflict such terrible grief. Every person who dies in the line of duty commands the special gratitude of the American people. And the military families that mourn can know this: Our Nation will not forget their loved ones and the sacrifice they made to protect us all.

The courage of our soldiers and their families show the spirit of this country in great adversity. And many citizens are showing their appreciation by helping military families here at home. Members of the VFW have started an Adopt-A-Unit program, so veterans and their families can support military units in Iraq and Afghanistan. Volunteers from a group called Rebuilding Together have repaired homes for military families while their spouses are deployed.

Citizens interested in finding volunteer opportunities to support our military should visit the USA Freedom Corps web site at usafreedomcorps.gov.

Our Nation owes a debt of gratitude to every member of the United States military and to their families. It was a privilege to offer that gratitude in person to some of our troops serving in Iraq. May God bless them all, and may He continue to bless the United States of America.

Happy Thanksgiving, and thank you for listening.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 9:55 a.m. on November 28 at the Bush Ranch in Crawford, TX, for broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on November 29. The transcript was made available by the Office of the Press Secretary on November 28 but was embargoed for release until the broadcast. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this address.

Remarks at a Bush-Cheney Luncheon in Dearborn, Michigan

December 1, 2003

Thank you all very much. Thanks for coming. I appreciate you joining our campaign. You know what this means? It means we're laying the foundation for what is going to be

a victory in Michigan and a nationwide victory in '04.

I want to thank you for your help, and I want to thank you for your support. I'm getting ready, and I'm loosening up. [*Laughter*] But the political season will come in its own time. There will be plenty of time for politics, plenty of time for all the balloon drops and political speeches. See, I've got a job to do. I've got a job to do for everybody who lives in this country. So when you go to your coffee shops and your community centers, you tell them, "The politics will come, but right now the President is working hard to make sure America is secure and strong and prosperous and free."

Laura sends her best. I know, you wish she were here instead of me. I understand. [*Laughter*] She's a fabulous First Lady. I really am a lucky man that she agreed to marry me, and the country, I think, is lucky that she is the First Lady.

I appreciate State campaign chair Candice Miller. I thank her for her introduction. I thank her for her service to this State. I look forward to working with her to carry Michigan. I want to thank Michael, Michael Kojaian, for his leadership as the State finance chairman for Bush-Cheney. I'm honored that Michael has taken on this responsibility.

I want to thank the Members of the United States Congress other than Candice Miller who have shown up today, Congressmen Upton, Camp, Knollenberg, Smith, Rogers, and McCotter. I'm honored they are here. I want to thank you all for coming.

I appreciate Secretary of State Terri Lynn Land for joining us today, as well as Attorney General Mike Cox. I know the speaker is here, Rick Johnson. Mr. Speaker, thank you for coming. And I appreciate all the members of the house and the State senate who have joined us. Go back to your districts and work hard—[*laughter*]—for Bush-Cheney '04.

I want to thank Betsy DeVos and Sharon Wise for taking a leadership position. I want to thank my friend Mercer Reynolds, who is the national finance chairman. Mostly I want to thank the activists who are here. You see, you win a campaign not only by helping to raise money; you win a campaign by putting up the signs and licking the envelopes and making the phone calls to turn out the vote. I want to thank you for what you're going to do as we come down the stretch in 2004.

And as you do so, I want you to remind people that during the last 3 years, our Nation has acted decisively to confront great challenges. You see, I came to this office to solve problems, not to pass them on to future Presidents and future generations. I came to seize opportunities instead of letting them slip away. My administration is meeting the tests of our time.

Terrorists declared war on the United States of America, and war is what they got. We've captured or killed many of the key leaders of the Al Qaida network, and the rest of them know we're on their trail. In Afghanistan and Iraq, we gave ultimatums to terror regimes. Those regimes chose defiance, and those regimes are no more. Fifty million people in those two countries once lived under tyranny, and today they live in freedom.

Three years ago, our military was not receiving the resources it needed, and morale was beginning to suffer. So we increased the defense budgets to prepare for the threat of a new era. And today, no one in the world can question the skill, the strength, and the spirit of the United States military.

Three years ago, the economy was in trouble and a recession was just beginning. And then our country was attacked, and we had corporate scandals and war—all affected the people's confidence. But we acted. We acted. We passed tough new laws to hold corporate criminals to account. And I have twice led the United States Congress to pass historic tax relief for the American people. When Americans have more take-home pay to spend, to save, or invest, the whole economy grows, and someone is more likely to find a job. So we're returning more money to the people to help them raise their families, reduce taxes on dividends and capital gains to encourage investment, giving small businesses incentives to expand and to hire new people. With all these actions—with all these actions, we're laying the foundation for greater prosperity and more jobs across America so that every single citizen has a chance to realize the American Dream.

Our economy is strong, and it is getting stronger. Figures for the third quarter were recently revised upward to an annual growth rate of 8.2 percent. That's the fastest growth rate in nearly 20 years. Today the purchasing manager's index came out, which shows that our manufacturing sector is getting stronger. It's the highest numbers in nearly 20 years. Productivity is high. Business investment is getting strong. Housing construction is strong. The tax relief we passed is working.

Three years ago, there was a lot of talk about education reform; there wasn't much action at the Federal Government. So I acted. I called for and Congress passed, with a solid bipartisan majority, the No Child Left Behind Act. This was the most dramatic education reform in a generation. It said we will spend money at the Federal level, particularly on Title I students, but for the first time, the Federal Government is demanding results, high standards and results. You see, we believe every child can learn the basics of reading and math. We expect every school to teach the basics of reading and math. This administration is challenging the soft bigotry of low expectations. In return for Federal money, we now expect results in every single classroom in America so not one single child is left behind.

During this period, we reorganized our Government and created the Department of Homeland Security to better safeguard our borders and ports and to better protect the American people. We passed trade promotion authority to open up new markets for Michigan's farmers and entrepreneurs and manufacturers. We passed budget agreements to help maintain spending discipline in Washington. On issue after issue, this administration has acted on principle, has kept its word, and has made progress for the American people.

The Congress shares in these achievements. We've done a lot because we've worked together. I appreciate Speaker Hastert and Leader Frist. Again, I want to thank the Members of the U.S. Congress who are here today. See, we're working hard to get rid of the needless politics that tends to dominate the political landscape in Washington, DC, the backbiting and name calling. The best way to do that is to focus on results for the American people, and that's exactly what we're doing. We're delivering for the American people.

And those are the kind of people I've attracted to my administration. A mark of the administration is the capacity of fine, good, honorable people from all walks of life to serve America, and I have done just that. I put together a great group of Americans to serve. This country has had no finer Vice President than Dick Cheney. Mother has a second opinion. [*Laughter*]

In 3 years, we have come far, we've done a lot, but our work is only beginning. I've set great goals worthy of this great Nation. First, America is committed to expanding the realm of freedom and peace for our own security and for the benefit of the world. And second, in our own country, we must work for a society that is prosperous and compassionate so that every citizen has a chance to work and to succeed and realize the tremendous promise of our country. It is clear that the future of freedom and peace depend on the actions of America. This Nation is freedom's home and freedom's defender. We welcome this charge of history, and we are keeping it.

The war on terror continues. The enemies of freedom are not idle, and neither are we. This country will not rest; we will not tire; we will not stop until this danger to civilization is removed. We are confronting that danger in Iraq, where Saddam holdouts and foreign terrorists are desperately trying to throw the country into chaos by attacking coalition forces and aid workers and innocent Iraqi citizens. They know that the advance of freedom in Iraq, in the heart of the Middle East, would be a major defeat for the cause of terror. The coalition of killers—the collection of killers is trying to shake the will of America. America will not be intimidated by a bunch of thugs and assassins. We are aggressively striking the terrorists in Iraq. We will defeat them there so we do not have to face them in our own country.

Other nations are helping. They're helping to build a free country in Iraq because they know a free Iraq will make us all more secure. We're standing with the Iraqi people, the brave Iraqi people, as they assume more of their own defense and more of their own

self-government. These are not easy tasks, but they are essential tasks. And the United States of America will finish what we have begun, and we will win this essential victory in the war on terror.

Our greatest security comes from the advance of human liberty, because free nations do not support terror. Free nations do not attack their neighbors. Free nations do not develop weapons of mass terror to threaten the world. Americans believe that freedom is the deepest need and hope of every human heart. We believe that freedom is the future of every nation. And we know that freedom is not America's gift to the world. Freedom is the Almighty God's gift to every man and woman living in this world.

America also understands that unprecedented influence brings tremendous responsibilities. When we see disease and starvation and hopeless poverty, we will not turn away. And that's why, on the continent of Africa, America is now committed to bringing the healing power of medicine to millions of men, women, and children now suffering with AIDS.

We face challenges here at home. Our actions will prove that we're equal to those challenges. I'm leaving here to go to a small business to talk about the entrepreneurial spirit in America, about the need to create—continue to create a pro-growth environment so their businesses, large and small, can remain vibrant and can grow, so that people can find a job.

We're keeping our commitment to America's seniors by strengthening and modernizing Medicare. See, for years, seniors have called for a modern Medicare system, one that provides coverage for prescription drugs and a system that gives seniors more choices. Washington listened. Washington didn't do anything. Finally, Washington has acted. I want to thank the House and the Senate for passing a bill I will shortly sign that will modernize the Medicare system and keep a promise to this country's seniors.

For the sake of our health care system, we need to cut down on the frivolous lawsuits which increase the cost of medicine. People who have been harmed by a bad doc deserve their day in court. Yet the system should not reward lawyers who are simply fishing for a rich settlement. Frivolous lawsuits drive up the cost of health care. They therefore affect the Federal budget. Medical liability reform is a national issue which requires a national solution. I proposed a good bill for the Congress to look at. The House of Representatives passed the bill. The bill is stuck in the United States Senate. The Senators from this State must act on behalf of the American people and support medical liability reform. No one has ever been healed by a frivolous lawsuit. We need reform now.

I have the responsibility as the President to make sure the judicial system runs well, and I have met that duty. I've nominated superb men and women for the Federal courts, people who will interpret the law, not legislate from the bench. A small group of Senators is willfully obstructing the process. Some appeals court nominees, including four from the great State of Michigan, four outstanding jurists from this State, are being forced to wait months or even years for an up-or-down vote. The needless delays in the system are harming the administration of justice. They're deeply unfair to the nominees themselves. It is time for some Members of the United States Senate to stop playing politics with American justice.

This country needs an energy policy. We need a policy that encourages more conservation and energy efficiency. We need an energy policy which will help modernize the infrastructure, the capacity to deliver much-needed power to homes and businesses. We need to explore in environmentally friendly ways for more energy. What we really need is, for the sake of economic security and national security, to become less dependent on foreign sources of power.

A strong and prosperous nation must be a compassionate nation as well. I'm going to continue to advance our agenda of what I call compassionate conservatism, which means we'll apply the most effective, the best, the most innovative ideas to the task of helping our fellow citizens in need. We'll promote social entrepreneurship all across our country. There's still millions of men and women who want to end their dependence on Government and become independent through hard work. We must build on the success of welfare reform by training and

help, so more of our fellow citizens can find work and dignity.

Congress should pass what's called the "Citizen Service Act" so more Americans can serve their communities and their countries. Both Houses should reach agreement on my Faith-Based Initiative. Government can hand out money, can write checks, but it cannot put hope in people's hearts or a sense of purpose in people's lives. Many of the seemingly intractable problems of our society can only be solved through love. And we find love in our houses of worship. We find love where there's faith, faith of all walks of life, faith of all religions. Our Government should not fear faith. We ought to welcome faith in the helping to heal the broken hearts of America.

A compassionate society is one that promotes opportunity for all, including the independence and dignity that come from ownership. This administration will constantly strive to promote an ownership society in America. See, we want more people owning their own home. We have a minority homeownership gap in this country. I've submitted a plan to Congress to help close that gap. We want people owning and controlling their own health care plans, their own retirement accounts. We want more people owning their own small business. You see, we understand that when a person owns something in America, he or she has a vital stake in the future of this country.

A compassionate society is one in which people respect one another, respect their points of view, respect their opinions, respect their religion, and also a society in which people take responsibility for the decisions they make. The culture is changing in America from one that said, "If it feels good, just go ahead and do it," and "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else," to a culture in which each of us understands we are responsible for the decisions we make in life.

If you're fortunate enough to be a mother or a father, you're responsible for loving your child with all your heart. If you're concerned about the quality of the education in the community in which you live, you're responsible for doing something about it. If you're a CEO in corporate America, you're responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees. And in a responsibility society, each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourself.

The culture of service is strong in America. People are accepting responsibility for the decisions they make. I started what's called the USA Freedom Corps. It was a chance for people to extend a compassionate hand to people in need, and the response has been strong. Our neighborhood healers are vibrant and strong. The armies of compassion are growing all across America. Policemen and firefighters and people who wear our Nation's uniform are reminding us what it means to sacrifice for something greater than yourself in life. Once again, the children of America believe in heroes, because they see them every day.

And in these challenging times, the world has seen the resolve and the courage of America. I've been privileged to see the compassion and the character of the American people. All the tests of the last 3 years have come to the right nation. We're a strong country, and we use that strength to defend the peace. We're an optimistic country, confident in ourselves and in ideals bigger than ourselves. Abroad, we seek to lift whole nations by spreading freedom. At home, we seek to lift up lives by spreading opportunity to every corner of this country. This is the work that history has set before us. We welcome it, and we know that for our country, the best days lie ahead.

May God bless you all. Thank you for coming. Glad you're here.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:05 p.m. at the Hyatt Regency Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of State Terri Lynn Land and State Attorney General Mike Cox of Michigan; Rick Johnson, speaker of the Michigan House of Representatives; Betsy DeVos, Michigan State chairman, and Sharon A. Wise, Michigan national committeewoman, Republican National Committee; and former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq. The President also referred to Title I of the Improving America's Schools Act of 1994 (Public Law No. 103–382), which amended Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (Public Law No. 89–10).

Remarks in a Discussion With Employers and Employees at Dynamic Metal Treating, Inc., in Canton, Michigan

December 1, 2003

The President. Loren, thanks for having us. Let me say a couple things before we get started here. First, thanks for coming out to say hello. We're here, obviously, to talk about one of the great strengths of America, which is the entrepreneurial spirit of our country, the small-business men and women who create the new jobs. And we're talking about jobs. And I want to thank you all for being here today to talk about your businesses and/or your personal lives.

Just a couple of things I want to remind our fellow citizens about. We've done a lot; we've overcome a lot, when you think about what this country has been through in a short period of time. First of all, as Loren mentioned, things starting going bad in 2000 for this business. In other words, we were headed into a recession. And that's tough, when there's a recession. That means negative growth. It means businesses, in order to survive, sometimes lay people off, which, worse, means that some of our fellow citizens are looking for work and are having trouble feeding their family.

And then the enemy hit us. Just as things were getting a little better, we got attacked. And let me take a step back. I'm never going to forget the lessons of September the 11th, 2001. The only way to deal with these cold-blooded killers is to stay on the offensive and bring them to justice, which is precisely what America will do.

And then we had some CEOs in corporate America forget what it means to be a responsible citizen. You might remember, right after the attacks, when the great resiliency of America came forth and the country began to recover from this unbelievable period of time, it turned out that we found—there were some corporate scandals, and that affected our confidence. We acted there. We passed some tough laws that sent a pretty clear message that if you betray the trust, if you don't tell the truth to your shareholders and employees, you need to be held to account. That means justice needs to be sent your way, and that's what's happening. And then we had a march to war. And that all affected the people's confidence.

And so when we talk about job creation and job growth, it's important to understand we have come through a lot, which speaks really to the greatness of America, doesn't it? It speaks to the greatness of the entrepreneurial spirit, to the high productivity of the American workforce. We're the best workers in the world. I think it speaks a little bit as well to the policies we put forth.

I want to thank the Members of the United States Congress who are here from the great State of Michigan. A lot of them have come over here, for which I am grateful. We passed tax relief, and I want to talk a little bit about tax relief, as we go through the panel, and its effect on economic recovery. Because when people have more money in their pocket, it means they're going to demand an additional good or a service, or likely demand a good or a service. And when that happens in our economy, somebody will produce it. And when somebody produces the good or a service to meet the demand, somebody is more likely to find a job. And so not only did the tax relief help hard-working Americans, with their pressures on their families and education needs, but it also helped the economy.

And the other thing I want to remind people about is that the tax relief was also geared toward small businesses. Most new jobs in America are created by small-business owners. You just heard Loren talk about—they laid off workers; they replaced those workers; and they've added workers. Well, there's all kinds of companies like Dynamic Metal across the country that are adding workers, one or two or three at a time, and that's the vibrancy of our economy. And the Congress wisely cut the—made it—provided the incentive for small businesses to invest. And if the proper incentive is in place, it means people will buy equipment and computer software, and that means somebody is likely to find a job as they provide that equipment for small businesses.

The other thing is, most small businesses do not pay corporate income tax. They pay tax at the individual level because they're a

Subchapter S or a limited liability partnership. And therefore, when you hear us talking about reducing all taxes on individuals, you really hear also the message that we're reducing taxes on small businesses. And when small business has got more money in their coffers, they're more likely to expand, and someone will find a job.

So what we're here today is talk about good economic policy. But really what we're here about is to make sure people can find a job. I mean, things look pretty good; the growth is high. Today the Purchasing Managers Index was released, which shows the manufacturing sector of the American economy is coming back pretty strong. But my attitude is, so long as we have one of our fellow citizens out of work and who wants to work, it says we've got a problem. So let's keep a pro-growth policy in place. We're here to emphasize the role of the small business in providing that job opportunity.

I want to thank both the small-business managers as well as the employees for joining us. And Loren, after that kind of long-winded explanation of why I'm here—[*laughter*]—take over.

[*The discussion continued.*]

The President. Yes. I appreciate the story. It's indicative of how small businesses work. You'd better be light on your feet and willing to change in order to survive, be flexible and fast, and to meet the needs of your consumer. Listen, Government can create an environment in which the entrepreneurial spirit remains strong, but we can't make you successful. That's up to you. And I appreciate the—you just laid out your strategy. I hope your competitor isn't listening. [*Laughter*]

Loren Epler. We're up to the challenge. [*Laughter*]

The President. That's good. But anyway, thank you for sharing that.

Sam, how about yourself?

[*The discussion continued.*]

The President. A couple of points that Sam made: One, we need an energy policy. If you noticed, he said energy costs are high. And we need clean coal technology. We need an energy policy. We need to encourage conservation and certainly efficiencies. But in order for manufacturing concerns to be vibrant and vital, they need reliable sources of energy. And I appreciate you bringing that up.

The other thing is, Sam, is I understand these tax cuts save you and your family about $2,000.

Sam Domke. For this next tax year, yes. And that's great. I can really use the money, I'm sure.

The President. The other thing, as I understand—we had a little visit beforehand—that Sam had a chance to refinance his home. Maybe some of you have done that as well. Part of the vitality of the economy is the fact that people are able to refinance because of lower interest rates, which puts a little money in the pocket because you've got lower monthly payments. But the $2,000 is important part of an economic recovery package. You see, it's his money to begin with. And we hear people say, well, the Government is giving Government money. It's not Government money; it's the people's money we're talking about. It's the hard-working people that make this economy grow.

My attitude is, the more money you've got in your pocket, the more likely it is your family is going to be okay, but more importantly, the more likely it is it will increase the demand for a good or a service.

Mr. Domke. I know we had the $800 checks that came back for the child credit, and that came in quite useful——

The President. Yes.

Mr. Domke. ——to help me pay some bills and——

The President. Actually, when the Government said, "The check's in the mail," it actually was. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Domke. Well, I got mine, so—[*laughter*].

The President. One of the things about the tax cuts that's important for people to understand is, they're not permanent. They're temporary because of a quirk in the law, particularly in the United States Senate. After a period of time, the tax cuts go away. And so one thing we need to do and make sure this economy stays strong is to make the tax cuts permanent. We don't want the child credit to go down. That will affect you. It's

like a tax increase. We don't want the marriage penalty to be as onerous as it used to be. We want the tax cuts to stay permanent, so that people—small businesses can plan and citizens can plan their lives.

And so one of the ways that Congress can respond to the economic recovery and to make sure that this recovery keeps going is to make these tax cuts real and long-lasting. I'm for it. I think it's essential that we do this. And I hope Congress joins.

[*The discussion continued.*]

The President. Again, Government can create an environment to encourage investment; it's up to you to produce the product so people want to invest with you, want to buy your stuff. And I presume the reason why you're doing good is you've got a good workforce.

Tom Zimmerman. Yes, we do. In fact this is a——

The President. Two of them happen to be here.

Mr. Zimmerman. Let me put them on here. This is John Krynak and Cliff Daniels. Pass it on to John.

John Krynak. Mr. President, it's good to be here. It's an honor and a privilege to have you here. I'm a family man myself. I was fortunate enough not to be one of the 10 percent that was laid off. I'm very thankful for that. Spectrum is a wonderful company. I'm blessed to have a wonderful wife, Krystal, and I have four children, two daughters, 7 and 9, and two boys, 11 years old.

The President. Twins?

Mr. Krynak. No, we're a blended family.

The President. Good.

Mr. Krynak. So we got $1,600 back——

The President. That's good. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Krynak. ——$1,600 back credit this year. And it came in handy. Went down to Myrtle Beach and—[*laughter*].

The President. Yes? Somebody had to feed you when you were down there, so you helped that person keep a job. But you also got some tax relief from the reduction of the rates, as I understand it——

Mr. Krynak. Yes, this year, I——

The President. ——$2,700, somebody told me.

Mr. Krynak. Yes.

The President. I'm not putting numbers in your mouth. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Krynak. Yes, the tax relief can be a big help this year. Income is still not quite where it was, but I'm thankful that it is on the rise. Overtime is back, kicking right now. I'm ready to put my shoulders to the wheel, keep it going.

The President. I suspect old Tom is happy to have you working with him.

Mr. Zimmerman. Very much so. A good person. Same with Cliff.

[*The discussion continued.*]

Cliff Daniels. I want to retire. Your plan that you're going to sign, your Medicare prescription bill, is going to help me immensely.

The President. Yes. It is going to help you.

Mr. Daniels. And I'm figuring that I'm paying about $900 right now. And with this plan, I should save about $5,000 a year. And I do want to thank you for that very much.

The President. Well, thanks. Thank the Congress. They finally got moving.

Mr. Daniels. One more thing, sir. Can you make it a Presidential order that our local football team, the Detroit Lions, win a road game? [*Laughter*]

The President. No. [*Laughter*] If I could, I might be thinking about some of those Texas teams. [*Laughter*]

I appreciate you bringing up health care. Small businesses have got an issue with health care. I think if you were to talk to these owners, they'll tell you. Small businesses need to be able to pool risk in what's called associated health care plans. Congress needs to allow this to happen so that you can share risk across jurisdictional boundaries. And that will help with health care costs.

I appreciate you bringing up Medicare. The people in the Congress worked hard to get a good bill out. And I think it's going to make a difference in a lot of seniors' lives. It will mean we've kept our promise. It's also going to make a difference in the lives of those of us who are fixing to be seniors. It means you're going to have more choice in the marketplace, plus prescription drugs will be available as part of the basic Medicare package. And those who can least afford it

will get the most help, of course, from the Government. So I thank you for bringing that up.

The other thing for health care, by the way, is it's very important that we have a society that allows a person to sue a bad doc if they get hurt. But we don't need a society in which there's junk and frivolous lawsuits being filed all the time which raise the cost of medicine, particularly to these businesses. It hurts these small-business owners when these people file these lawsuits over and over and over again. And therefore, for a while—I looked at this issue for a while, and then I decided it was a national issue because it affected our Medicare budgets, the Medicaid budgets, the veteran health care costs, because docs practice what's called defensive medicine. If they think they're going to get sued, they'll provide more medicine than needed. And you would too, if you were a doctor who thought you were going to get sued. And that then makes medicine more expensive, and it runs the cost up for you as well as the employers all around the country.

And then the other thing that happens is, docs have to pay a high premium for liability reform—insurance, and they're starting to quit the practice of medicine, which means now medicine is more expensive and less available. And so we need medical liability reform.

I want to thank the Members of the House who are here who voted with us on that bill. It was a good piece of legislation. It's stuck in the Senate, however. We need to get it out of the Senate.

And so that can help us as well. I'll tell you the other thing that I think is important for these small-business owners to hear is, at the State level—and I know that Terri Lynn is here and the attorney general is here and others from the State of Michigan are here—we need less paperwork requirements on small business, less regulations and the paperwork that these owners have to file—same, by the way, at the Federal level. It's one thing to regulate; it's another thing to overregulate. And a lot of times Government has a tendency to overregulate, which is a nonproductive cost to these small-business owners who would rather be employing people and making it easier for somebody to find work than filling out reams of paperwork that probably doesn't get read anyway.

Finally, I know there's a lot of talk about trade. I just want you to understand my position on trade. If you're good at something, we ought to try to find more markets. And we're good at a lot of things. We've got the most productive workforce in America. And we've got some of the greatest farmers in America. And we've got some of the greatest entrepreneurs in America. And therefore, it seems like to make sense to me that we ought to be opening up markets for us to sell our goods. But the other thing I want you to understand is, we're going to make sure it's fair. We want the playing field to be level so we can compete in a fair way.

But those are some of the things that we can do to keep the economy growing. And that's important. We're really here to talk about how to sustain the economic growth. About 286,000 new jobs were created over the last 3 months, and we need more. I think the foundation is laid. You've heard these two business owners talk in terms of their hiring new people and how confident they are, and that's good. We've just got to keep it going. We want everybody in the country working. We want the people who have the responsibility to put food on the table to be able to find a job to do so. We want to answer that human desire of a responsible dad to be able to say to his four children, in this case, "Here's something not only for you to eat but something for you to maybe put aside for your education." That's what we want.

And a vibrant economy will provide that opportunity for people to seize the moment. And we've got some people up here who have—one has already seized the moment. He kind of looks like he's going to try to quit seizing it. But you never retire, by the way. [*Laughter*] You never retire. And we've got some great workers and great owners up here.

I want to repeat to you that the entrepreneurial spirit of America is strong. And we aim to keep it that way. We want people owning their own business. We want people to feel like if you want to be a small-business

owner, there's a chance for you. No guarantees of success, but the opportunity is available for people from all walks of life, I might add, all throughout our society. You know, one of the great strengths of America is the fact that we've got a lot of people that say, "I want to own my own company," and feel confident in trying to start that business and making it work. It's really what makes our society such a vibrant and wholesome place.

We're looking at two people right here who have taken on the tough task of running a small business. It's not easy. It may look simple when you hear them talk about it, but it's hard work. But it's the creativity and the spirit of the entrepreneur in America that I think sets us apart, and kind of the backbone and vibrancy of our society.

I want to say one other thing, and then I promise to be quiet. I met a guy at the airport today. Where is he? Did he come out? There he is. This is a good man. This is Brad Simmons. You probably never heard of Brad; I hadn't either until I landed. The reason I mention Brad is he works for Ford, but more importantly, he is in charge of encouraging Ford employees to volunteer in your communities. See, he's taken it upon himself to tap into the true spirit of the American soul, and that is that spirit that says, "I want to help a neighbor in need." And Brad's particular focus has been on Boy Scouts. But he's got a broader job at Ford, and that is to say—to encourage voluntarism.

You know, the reason I like to talk about people like Brad—as I told Brad, he is a soldier in the army of compassion in our country. It's the Brad Simmonses of the world who really define the true character of America. You see, our strength is not measured by the size of our military or the size of our Treasury. Our strength is measured by the size of the hearts and souls of our fellow citizens, people who are willing to love a neighbor just like they'd like to be loved themselves. Brad reflects the true spirit of America. He's a great credit upon the country.

And for those of you who are doing your duty as responsible citizens, whether it being a good mom or a dad or helping a neighbor in need, I want to thank you on behalf of a grateful nation. The strength of America is the people of this country. And it's my privilege to be the President of such a great country.

God bless you all. Thank you for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:24 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of State Terri Lynn Land and State Attorney General Mike Cox of Michigan; Loren Epler, president, and Sam Domke, quality manager, Dynamic Metal Treating, Inc.; and Tom Zimmerman, secretary and treasurer, Spectrum Automation Co.

Remarks at a Bush-Cheney Reception in Whippany, New Jersey

December 1, 2003

The President. Thank you all very much. I appreciate the warm welcome. I'm so thankful so many friends have come tonight. You know, earlier this fall, I had the honor of welcoming a fine hockey team from this State to the White House to celebrate their championship. But the start the Devils have had this season looks like they need to repeat their trip back to the White House. I'm making similar plans myself. And with your help tonight, we are laying the foundation for what will be a victory in New Jersey in '04 and a nationwide victory in '04.

I'm getting ready. I'm loosening up. But the truth of the matter is, politics will come in its own time. See, I've got a job to do. What I would like for you to do is to remind your friends and neighbors that this administration and this President is working hard to keep America secure and strong and peaceful and free.

My only regret tonight is that Laura is not traveling with me.

Audience members. Aw-w-w.

The President. No, I know. Yes. [*Laughter*] You'd rather have her. I don't blame you. [*Laughter*] She's a fabulous wife, a great mother, and she's doing a wonderful job as our country's First Lady. And somebody who did a great job for our country, a valued member of my Cabinet, a person whose judgment I trust, that would be Christie Todd Whitman. I'm proud—[*applause*]. I miss her. But she did leave behind a little something there in Washington, DC; his name is Barney. [*Laughter*] I know——

Audience member. I love you!

The President. *Gracias.* [*Laughter*] I appreciate the fact that Christie Todd is our State chairman. And I want to thank my friend Lew Eisenberg for being the State campaign cochairman and finance chairman for the great State of New Jersey. I understand that some of Lew's grandchildren gave the Pledge of Allegiance. They're raising them right in his family. [*Laughter*]

I want to thank Congressman Rodney Frelinghuysen for being here. Rodney is a friend and an ally. He's doing a great job for the people of New Jersey. I'm also pleased that his wife, Virginia, is with him. I also want to thank my friend and ally Mike Ferguson—Congressman Mike Ferguson.

I know we've got members of the statehouse here. I particularly want to thank Senator Joe Kyrillos, who is the party chairman; State Senator Leonard Lance, who is the new minority leader for the State senate; State Assemblyman Alex DeCroce is the new minority leader.

I know we've got a lot of mayors here. I want to thank the mayors for coming. My only advice is to make sure you fill the potholes—[*laughter*]—and pick up the garbage. [*Laughter*] I thank the mayors for being here. Thank you for serving your towns and your communities.

I particularly want to thank my friend Mercer Reynolds, who's the national finance chairman. And he's from Cincinnati, Ohio. He's joined us today.

I want to thank all the grassroot activists who are here. You win campaigns by convincing your neighbor to go to the poll. So I want to thank you for what you're going to do, which is put up the signs and get on the phones and mail out the letters and convince your fellow citizens to do their duty and to show up to vote in November of 2004. You might just convince them, when they show up to vote, to vote for Bush-Cheney.

Remind them that during the last 3 years, our Nation has acted decisively to confront great challenges. I came to this office to solve problems and not pass them on to future Presidents and future generations. I came to seize opportunities instead of letting them slip away. My administration is meeting the tests of our time.

Terrorists declared war on the United States of America, and war is what they got. We captured or killed many of the key leaders of the Al Qaida network, and the rest of them know we're on their trail. In Afghanistan and Iraq, we gave ultimatums to terror regimes. Those regimes chose defiance, and those regimes are no more. Fifty million people in those two countries once lived under tyranny, and today, they live in freedom.

Three years ago, our military was not receiving the resources it needed, and morale was beginning to suffer, so we increased the defense budgets to prepare for the threats of a new era. And today, no one in the world can question the skill, the strength, and the spirit of the United States military.

Three years ago, the economy was in trouble and a recession was beginning. And then our country was attacked, and we had scandals in corporate America, and war—all affected the people's confidence. But we acted. We passed up new laws to hold corporate criminals to account. And to get the economy going again, I have twice led the United States Congress to pass historic tax relief for the American people. We know that when Americans have more take-home pay to spend, to save, or invest, the whole economy grows, and people are more likely to find a job. That's why we're returning more money to the people to help them raise their families, why we reduced taxes on dividends and capital gains to encourage investment. And that's why we're giving small businesses incentives to expand and to hire new people. With all these actions, this administration has laid the foundation for greater prosperity across America so that every single person in this country has a chance to realize the American Dream.

Today, the American economy is strong, and it is getting stronger. Perhaps you noticed that the third quarter annualized rate of growth numbers were increased to 8.2 percent, the fastest pace in nearly 20 years. Today the Purchasing Managers Index came out, showing that our manufacturing sector is recovering strongly. Productivity is high. Housing constructing is booming. The tax relief we passed, the economic stimulus plan that we passed, is working.

Three years ago, there was a lot of talk about education reform in Washington, DC, but there wasn't much action. So I acted. I called for and the Congress passed the No Child Left Behind Act. With a solid bipartisan majority, we delivered the most dramatic education reform in a generation. We believe that every child in America can learn the basics of reading and math, and we believe that every school in America should teach the basics. This administration is challenging the soft bigotry of low expectations. In return for increased Federal dollars, we now expect results. The days of excusemaking are over. We want every child to learn to read and write and add and subtract so that not one single child is left behind in America.

We reorganized our Government and created the Department of Homeland Security to better safeguard the borders and ports of America and to better protect the American people. We passed trade promotion authority to open up new markets for New Jersey's farmers and entrepreneurs and manufacturers. We passed budget agreements to help bring spending discipline to Washington, DC. On issue after issue, this administration has acted on principle, has kept its word, and has made progress for the American people.

The United States Congress has shared in these great achievements. I appreciate working with Speaker Denny Hastert and Majority Leader Bill Frist. I want to thank Rodney and Mike for working with us to focus on results. The tone in Washington needs to be changed. There's too much needless partisanship, backbiting, and bickering. The best way to do that is to focus on results, and that's what we'll continue to do. We'll work with Congress to focus on results, to do the people's business.

And those are the kind of people I've attracted to my administration. I've put together a superb group of men and women from all walks of life to serve the American people. And we've had no finer Vice President than Dick Cheney. Mother may have a second opinion. [*Laughter*]

In 3 years, we have done a lot. In 3 years, we've come far, but our work is only beginning. I have set great goals worthy of a great nation. First, America is committed to expanding the realm of freedom and peace for our own security and for the benefit of the world. And second, in our own country, we must work for a society that is prosperous and compassionate so every single citizen has a chance to work and to succeed and realize the great promise of America.

It is clear that the future of freedom and peace depend on the actions of America. This Nation is freedom's home and freedom's defender. We welcome this charge of history, and we are keeping it. The war on terror continues. The enemies of freedom are not idle, and neither are we. This country will not rest, we will not tire, we will not stop until this danger to civilization is removed.

We're confronting that danger in Iraq, where Saddam holdouts and foreign terrorists are desperately trying to throw Iraq into chaos by attacking coalition forces and international aid workers and innocent Iraqi citizens. They know that the advance of freedom in the heart of the Middle East would be a major defeat for the cause of terror. This collection of coldblooded killers is trying to shake the will of the United States. The United States will never be intimidated by a bunch of thugs and assassins.

We are aggressively striking the terrorists in Iraq, defeating them there so we do not have to face them in our own country. And other nations are helping, because they understand a free Iraq will make us all more secure. And we're standing with the brave Iraqi people as they assume more of their own defense and move toward self-government. These are not easy tasks, but they are essential tasks. We will finish what we have begun, and we will win this essential victory in the war on terror.

Our greatest security comes from the advance of human liberty, because free nations do not support terror. Free nations do not attack their neighbors. Free nations do not threaten the world with weapons of mass terror. Americans believe that freedom is the deepest need and hope of every human heart. I believe that freedom is the future of every nation. And I know that freedom is not America's gift to the world; freedom is the Almighty's gift to each man and woman who lives in the world.

America understands that unprecedented influence brings tremendous responsibilities. We have duties in this world. When we see disease and starvation and hopeless poverty, we will not turn away. And that is why, on the continent of Africa, America is now committed to bringing the healing power of medicine to millions of men, women, and children now suffering with AIDS. This great, powerful nation is leading the world in this incredibly important work of human rescue.

We face challenges at home as well, and our actions will prove that we're equal to the challenges. Even though the economic numbers look good, there are still people who are trying to find a job. I will continue to promote a progrowth, entrepreneurially friendly growth package so that the people of America can find work.

As Christie Todd has mentioned, we are keeping our commitment to America's seniors by strengthening and modernizing Medicare. For years, seniors have called for a modern Medicare system that provides health care choices and prescription drug coverage. For years, the Congress did nothing. Finally, the House and the Senate have both approved legislation, which I will soon sign, that will keep our promise to America's seniors.

For the sake of our health care system, we need to cut down on the frivolous lawsuits which increase the cost of medicine. People who have been harmed by a bad doc deserve their day in court, yet the system should not reward lawyers who are simply fishing for a rich settlement. Frivolous lawsuits drive up the cost of health care and, therefore, they affect the Federal budget. Medical liability reform is a national issue which requires a national solution. I submitted a good plan to the Congress. The House of Representatives passed the plan. It is stuck in the United States Senate. Perhaps you ought to write your United States Senators and remind them that nobody in America has been healed by a frivolous lawsuit. We need medical liability reform now.

I have a responsibility as your President to make sure the judicial system runs well, and I have met that duty. I have nominated superb men and women to the Federal bench, people who will interpret the law, not legislate from the bench. Some Members of the United States Senate are trying to keep my nominees off the bench by blocking up-or-down votes. Every judicial nominee deserves a fair hearing and an up-or-down vote on the Senate floor. It is time for some of the Members of the U.S. Senate to stop playing politics with American justice.

Congress needs to get an energy bill to my desk. This country needs a comprehensive energy plan that will encourage conservation, that will enable us to develop new technologies that will enable us to find energy in environmentally friendly ways. For the sake of economic security and for the sake of national security, this country must become less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

A strong and prosperous nation must also be a compassionate nation. I will continue to advance our agenda of what I call compassionate conservatism, which means we'll find the most innovative, effective ideas to help neighbors who hurt. There are still millions of men and women who want to end their dependence upon Government and become independent through hard work. Congress must continue to build on the success of welfare reform, provide job training money to help our fellow citizens find a job. Congress should complete the "Citizen Service Act" so more Americans can serve their communities and their country. Both Houses should reach agreement on my Faith-Based Initiative to support the armies of compassion that are mentoring children and caring for the homeless and offering hope for the addicted. One of the great strengths of our country is the fact that we are a nation of many faiths and the fact that faith-based people, whether they be Christian, Jewish, or Muslim, have had a universal call to help somebody in need. Government should not fear faith; we ought to welcome faith and to help healing—to help to heal hurting hearts and people who need help in America.

A compassionate society must promote opportunity for all, including the independence and dignity that come from ownership. This administration will constantly strive to promote an ownership society in America. We want more people owning their own home. We have a minority homeownership gap in

America. I presented plans to the Congress to close that gap. We want more people owning and managing their own retirement accounts and their own health care plans. We want more people owning their own small business in America, because this administration understands that when a person owns something, he or she has a vital stake in the future of our country.

In a compassionate society, people respect one another, respect their point of view, respect their religious beliefs, and take responsibility for the decisions they make. The culture of America is changing from one that has said, "If it feels good, do it," and "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else," to a new day, a culture in which each of us understands that we're responsible for the decisions we make in life. If you are fortunate enough to be a mother or a father, you're responsible for loving your child with all your heart. If you're worried about the quality of the education in the community in which you live, you're responsible for doing something about it. If you're a CEO in corporate America, you're responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees. And in a new responsibility society, each of us is responsible for heeding a universal call to love a neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourself.

The culture of service is strong in America. People are responding to the call to serve their country. I started what's called the USA Freedom Corps to encourage Americans to extend a compassionate hand to a neighbor in need. The response has been strong. People are serving their Nation by supporting charities, faith-based groups, neighborhood healers that are changing America one life at a time. Policemen and firefighters and the people who wear our Nation's uniform remind us what it means to sacrifice for something greater than ourselves. Once again, the children of America believe in heroes, because they see them every day.

In these challenging times, the world has seen the resolve and the courage of America. I've been privileged to see the compassion and the character of the American people. All the tests of the last 3 years have come to the right nation. We're a strong country, and we use that strength to defend the peace. We're an optimistic country, confident in ourselves and in ideals bigger than ourselves.

Abroad, we seek to lift whole nations by spreading freedom. At home, we seek to lift up lives by spreading opportunity to every corner of America. This is the work that history has set before us. We welcome it. And we know that for our country, the best days lie ahead.

Thank you for coming. God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:55 p.m. at the Hanover Marriott. In his remarks, he referred to Christine Todd Whitman, former Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency.

Statement on Signing the Energy and Water Development Appropriations Act, 2004

December 1, 2003

Today, I have signed into law H.R. 2754, the "Energy and Water Development Appropriations Act, 2004." The Act funds programs of the Department of Energy, the Department of the Interior's Bureau of Reclamation, the Army Corps of Engineers, and several other agencies, and provides funds to help protect the Nation's environment.

The executive branch shall construe provisions of the Act that direct the Secretary of a military department to perform the Secretary's duties through a particular military officer in a manner consistent with the statutory authority of the Secretary of Defense to exercise authority, direction, and control of the Department of Defense and the constitutional authority of the President to supervise the unitary executive branch and as Commander in Chief.

Provisions in sections 209 and 303 and under the heading "Construction, General" in title I purport to require the approval of committees of the Congress before executive branch execution of aspects of the Act or to preclude executive branch execution of a provision of the Act upon the written disapproval of such a committee. The executive branch shall construe such provisions to require only notification to the Congress, as any other construction would contravene the

constitutional principles set forth by the Supreme Court in *INS* v. *Chadha*.

George W. Bush

The White House,
December 1, 2003.

NOTE: H.R. 2754, approved December 1, was assigned Public Law No. 108–137.

Proclamation 7740—World AIDS Day, 2003

December 1, 2003

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

The HIV/AIDS pandemic presents one of the greatest medical and social challenges of our time. On World AIDS Day, members of the global community come together to demonstrate our shared commitment to turning the tide against the spread of HIV/AIDS, bringing hope and healing to those who are suffering, and finding a cure.

Over the last two decades, AIDS has claimed the lives of more than 20 million people. Three million have died in the last year alone. Today, more than 40 million people are living with HIV, including nearly 30 million in Africa. Behind these staggering numbers are the names and faces of orphaned and suffering children, devastated communities, and a continent in crisis.

In my State of the Union Message to the Congress in January of this year, I announced an "Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief," with a goal of helping millions around the world affected by HIV/AIDS, particularly those in the most afflicted nations in Africa and the Caribbean. In May, the Congress responded by passing the "United States Leadership Against HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria Act of 2003," which I signed into law. A life-saving initiative, the Act commits $15 billion over the next 5 years to prevent 7 million new HIV infections, treat at least 2 million people with life-extending drugs, provide care for at least 10 million people affected by AIDS, continue bilateral programs in over 75 countries, and increase support for the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis, and Malaria. This work of mercy will help overcome fear, stigma, and discrimination and create a cycle of hope and promise that will benefit millions.

Here at home, we will spend more than $15 billion this year to combat AIDS in America. This money will support research activities, care and treatment services, and prevention programs, including the wide availability of rapid HIV testing.

Fighting HIV/AIDS is not only a great challenge but also a moral imperative for those who believe in the value and dignity of every human life. This World AIDS Day, the United States remains committed to taking action, showing compassion, and bringing hope to those affected by HIV/AIDS around the world.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim December 1, 2003, as World AIDS Day. I urge the Governors of the States and the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, officials of the other territories subject to the jurisdiction of the United States, and the American people to join me in reaffirming our commitment to combating HIV/AIDS. I encourage all Americans to participate in appropriate commemorative programs and ceremonies in houses of worship, workplaces, and other community centers to remember those who have lost their lives to this deadly disease and to comfort and support those living with and affected by HIV/AIDS.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this first day of December, in the year of our Lord two thousand three, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-eighth.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., December 3, 2003]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on December 4.

Remarks on Signing the Adoption Promotion Act of 2003

December 2, 2003

The President. Good to see you all. Thank you. Thanks. Please be seated. Hi, Mary. Thank you, Jim. Thanks for coming. Thank you all for coming. Gosh, we got a lot of great families with us today. We're really proud you all are here. I want to thank you for coming to the Roosevelt Room. I'm delighted you're here.

The adoption of a boy or a girl is a moment of joy for a family, and it's a act of great generosity. When parents share their homes and all they have with a child, the child they adopt and love as their own, all their lives are transformed forever. Isn't that right?

Diana Martin. Yes.

Christopher Martin. Yes. [*Laughter*]

The President. In every young life, there is a great need to belong. For the sake of our children, this Nation has a responsibility to encourage adoption of children at all ages, from infants to adolescents. The legislation I'm about to sign today sends a clear message: Our society is building a culture that values every life, and our Government strongly supports adoption.

I appreciate Deputy Secretary Claude Allen from the Department of Health and Human Services for joining us. I want to thank three Members of the Congress who have been instrumental in this legislation, and I appreciate their good, hard work. Senator Mary Landrieu of the great State of Louisiana is with us, Jim Oberstar of Minnesota, and Dave Camp of Michigan. Thank you all for coming. I appreciate you taking time to come to herald this important piece of legislation. I'm honored you all are here.

Bruce Willis is not with us, but I do want to thank him for being the national spokesperson on foster care and adoption. His message is helpful. It's important to help spread the word about the joys of adoption, and Bruce has been mighty helpful in doing just that.

I want to thank the parents of adoptive children who are with us today. The Martin family, the Hendrix family are with us, the Morris family and the Schwarzwalder family. I'm honored you all are here. I want to thank you for giving me a chance and the Members of Congress a chance, after the bill signing, to personally thank you for showing America the generosity of spirit that makes our country such a wonderful place. We're really glad you're here.

Thanks to the Congress and thanks to the groups that work on behalf of foster children and to moms and dads across America, these last few years have brought real progress in the cause of adoption. We're making progress here in America.

Six years ago, Congress provided new incentives to the States to promote foster care adoptions, and those incentives have worked. I suspect these Members of Congress worked on that important legislation. In just 5 years, from 1998 to 2002, the States placed more than 230,000 children in adoptive homes—about the same number that had been adopted in the previous 10 years. We're making some progress here in America.

In the same period, 33 States and the District of Columbia have at least doubled foster care adoptions. To further promote adoption, we increased the adoption tax credit in 2001 from $5,000 to $10,000. I want to thank the Members for working on that important piece of legislation. I hope it helps families.

In 2002, my administration created a new web site called AdoptUSKids.org, which has already helped to join nearly 2,000 children with adoptive parents. In other words, if you want to be a part of this movement of love in America, go to the web site, and the web site will help you understand how best to become an adoptive parent. Many more still await their chance and their home, and we are determined to help all children in America.

Today in America, more 126,000 foster children still need an adoptive family. And nearly half of these children are past the age of 9. Foster parents bring help and kindness at a crucial point in a child's life, yet foster care is by nature temporary. And the aim of the system and the desire of every child is a permanent home.

The bill I sign this morning will help bring that opportunity to many more children of all ages. The Adoption Promotion Act of 2003 will continue all the current incentives that have created new momentum for the

adoption process in our States. In addition, we will begin monitoring the adoptions of foster children age 9 and older and provide extra incentives for States to increase adoption of older children. This is a proven way to increase the placement of children from foster care to permanent homes, and each one of those homes will be richer for the addition of new family members.

Here's one example standing with me. It's what we call a good-size American family. [*Laughter*]

Mrs. Martin. Amen.

Mr. Martin. Yes.

The President. Diana and Chris Martin, good, solid Americans, good, loving mom and dad, are with us with seven children, four of them adopted at ages 6, 8, 10, and 11 years old.

You were 6.

Mrs. Martin. That's right.

The President. How old are you?

Terrance Martin. Seven.

The President. Okay, 7. [*Laughter*] I'll take it up with the fact-checker. [*Laughter*] Children who, at one time, were 6, 8, 10, and 11. [*Laughter*]

Chris says, "Besides having to add a whole new wing on the house"—maybe the tax credit helps—[*laughter*]—"it can be emotionally trying. They have a sense of abandonment, and they came with the fear of bonding to you because they've been let down, and they're afraid." He also said, "It's been rewarding because you can see the love in their eyes when they finally realize they have a place, they have a home, and that I am their dad."

Adoptive parents are giving much, and they are gaining much. The future of many thousands of children depend on the willingness of caring parents to make that personal commitment. It would take less than 1 percent of the American population to provide a home to every child awaiting adoption. Welcoming a child into your home and calling that child your son or daughter is a major decision. It is never to be made lightly. Yet so many parents who have made that decision count it among life's greatest and happiest turning points. And so I hope more Americans, after careful thought and prayer, will make the decision to adopt a boy or girl of their own.

The act of Congress strongly affirms our national commitment to adoption and will encourage adoption in every part of our land. I want to thank you all for coming. We're honored to be with such loving parents and great Americans.

And now I'd like to ask the Members of Congress to join me as I sign this important piece of legislation, and maybe this great family would like to join us as well. Thanks for coming.

Here, Mary, get in here. All right, is everybody ready?

Audience members. Yes.

Child. Can I come in there too?

The President. You want to come in here? [*Laughter*]

Children. Yes.

The President. Sure, come on. All right. They won't ask her any questions. [*Laughter*] You ready?

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:25 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to actor Bruce Willis, spokesman for Children in Foster Care. H.R. 3182, approved December 2, was assigned Public Law No. 108–145.

Remarks at a Bush-Cheney Luncheon in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

December 2, 2003

I appreciate you coming. Thanks for being here. It's great to be back in Knowledge City—Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Thanks for the warm welcome. I thought I'd start off by talking a little bit about Texas football. [*Laughter*] Then I ran into Jerome Bettis. [*Laughter*] I'm a man who listens to good advice. [*Laughter*] So I'd better talk about thanking you for coming. [*Laughter*]

I appreciate your strong support. I'm proud to be back in Pennsylvania. We're laying the foundation for what is going to be a victory in Pennsylvania in 2004 and a nationwide victory in 2004.

I'm getting ready. I'm loosening up. [*Laughter*] But politics will come in its own time. I've got a job to do. I've got a job to

do for every single American. I want you to remind your friends as the political season unwinds that I will continue to work hard to earn the confidence of every American by keeping this Nation secure and strong and prosperous and free.

I regret one thing about today, and that is that Laura is not traveling with me. Yes. You probably regret the fact that she's not the headline speaker. [*Laughter*] She is a fabulous lady. I love her dearly. She's a great wife, a wonderful mother, and she's doing a wonderful job for the people of this country as the First Lady.

I appreciate Evans Rose's leadership and short introduction. [*Laughter*] Evans has done a fine job. He's been a friend for a long time. I want to thank you for responding to his call. I want to thank Arlen Specter, who is the State campaign co-chairman for Bush-Cheney '04. I'm proud that he's traveling with me today on Air Force One. He'll attest to the fact there's not much air rage on Air Force One. [*Laughter*] But I'm proud of his leadership for the State of Pennsylvania. I look forward to working with him as the chairman of the Judiciary Committee in the United States Senate to make sure my judges get through and get appointed.

I want to thank Congresswoman Melissa Hart and Congressman Tim Murphy for joining us today. Both are doing a fine job and are strong members of the mighty Pennsylvania delegation. I understand my friend Rob Portman has snuck across the border from the State of Ohio. I appreciate so very much Rob being here. He's one of the rising stars in the United States House of Representatives and is a strong ally.

I'm honored that the Attorney General Mike Fisher has joined us. General, I'm glad you're here. I appreciate you coming.

I want to thank the local and State officials who are here. I know we've got the—Roddey is with us, and other mayors might be with us. If you're a mayor who is here, my only advice is to make sure you fill the potholes—[*laughter*]—maybe pick up the garbage too. Thanks for serving.

My friend Mercer Reynolds, who is the Bush-Cheney '04 national finance chairman, is here today. And I appreciate Mercer's strong support and hard work. David GirardiCarlo is here, and Manny Stamatakis is here. They're both great friends. They're not from this part of the State; they're from down there in the Philadelphia area, like Arlen, but they're strong supporters and they're taking a leadership role to help us raise money. I appreciate Leslie Gromis Baker for her hard work.

And I want to thank all the grassroots politicians who are here, the people who are turning out the vote. I'm counting on you. I'm counting on you to go to your coffee shops and community centers, and I'm counting on you to put up the signs and to make the phone calls and to mail the letters. I'm counting on you to find the people and get them to the polls. That's how you win elections. And that's how we're going to win in Pennsylvania, because of your hard work and strong support.

And finally, I'm proud to be here with Lynn Swann, my friend who is the chairman of the President's Council on Physical Fitness. What you need to do—[*applause*]—you need to exercise. [*Laughter*] And Lynn is helping us send the message to young and old alike in this country that a healthy America is a country that takes care of its physical fitness needs. As a matter of fact, when I get back this evening, I think I'll just get a good jog in. I appreciate Lynn's friendship.

In the last 3 years, our Nation has acted decisively to confront great challenges. I came to this office to solve problems instead of passing them on to future Presidents and future generations. I came to seize opportunities instead of letting them slip away. My administration is meeting the tests of our time.

Terrorists declared war on the United States of America, and war is what they got. We have captured or killed many key leaders of the Al Qaida network, and the rest of them know we're on their trail. In Afghanistan and in Iraq, we gave ultimatums to terror regimes. Those regimes chose defiance, and those regimes are no more. Fifty million people in those two countries once lived under tyranny, and today, they live in freedom.

Three years ago, our military was not receiving the help it needed, and morale was beginning to suffer, so we increased the defense budget to prepare for the threats of

a new era. And today, no one in the world can question the skill and the strength and the spirit of the United States military.

Three years ago, the economy was in trouble, and a recession was beginning. And then our country was attacked, and we had some scandals in corporate America, and we marched to war for our own security and for the peace of the world. All that affected the people's confidence. But we acted. We passed tough new laws to hold corporate criminals to account. And to get the economy going again, I have twice led the United States Congress to pass historic tax relief for the American people. When Americans have more take-home pay to spend, to save or invest, the whole economy grows, and some people are more likely to be able to find a job. So we're returning money to the American people to help them raise their families, reducing taxes on dividends and capital gains to encourage investment. We're giving small businesses incentives to expand so they can hire new people. With all these actions, this administration has laid the foundation for greater prosperity and more jobs across America, so every single citizen has a chance to realize the American Dream.

The American economy is strong, and it is getting stronger. Perhaps you saw the fact that the third quarter annualized growth numbers were increased to 8.2 percent, the fastest pace in nearly 20 years. Yesterday, the Purchasing Managers Index was released, which shows strong growth in the manufacturing sector of the U.S. economy. Productivity is high. Business investment is rising. Housing construction is strong. The economic stimulus package that we passed out of the United States Congress is working.

Three years ago, there was a lot of talk about education reform, but there wasn't much action. So I acted. I called for and the Congress passed the No Child Left Behind Act. With a solid bipartisan majority, we delivered the most dramatic education reforms in a generation. This administration is challenging the soft bigotry of low expectations. We believe every child can learn the basics of reading and math. We expect every school to teach the basics of reading and math. In return for increased Federal money for Title I students, we want States to measure so that not one single child is left behind in America.

We reorganized the Government and created the Department of Homeland Security, ably headed by former Governor of Pennsylvania Tom Ridge. We did so to better safeguard our borders and our ports and to better protect the American people. We passed trade promotion authority to open up new markets for America's entrepreneurs and farmers and ranchers and manufacturers. We passed much needed budget agreements to maintain spending discipline. In Washington, DC, on issue after issue, this administration has acted on principle, has kept its word, and has made progress for the American people.

The Congress gets a lot of credit. I enjoy working with Speaker Denny Hastert and Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist. I enjoy working with the Pennsylvania Senators and the Members of the House. I enjoy working on the people's business. We're working hard to change the tone in Washington, DC. It's—there's just too much backbiting and endless politics. And the best way to change the tone is to focus on results, is to do the work on behalf of the American people. And that's exactly what we're doing.

And those are the kind of people I've attracted to my administration. I've assembled a fine group of Americans, people from all walks of life, people from different backgrounds, who have come to Washington, DC, with one thing in mind, and that is to serve the greatest nation on the face of the Earth. Our country has had no finer Vice President than Dick Cheney. Mother has a second opinion. [*Laughter*]

In 3 years, we have come far. We have done a lot for the people, but our work is only beginning. We have great—I have set great goals worthy of a great nation. First, America is committed to expanding the realm of freedom and peace for our own security and for the benefit of the world. And second, in our own country, we must work for a society that is prosperous and compassionate so that every single citizen has a chance to realize the great promise of America.

It is clear that the future of freedom and peace depend on the actions of America. This

Nation is freedom's home and freedom's defender. We welcome this charge of history, and we are keeping it. The war on terror continues. The enemies of freedom are not idle, and neither are we. This country will not rest, we will not stop, we will not tire until this danger to civilization is removed.

We are confronting that danger in Iraq, where Saddam holdouts and foreign terrorists are desperately trying to throw Iraq into chaos by attacking coalition forces or international aid workers and innocent Iraqi citizens. See, they know that the advance of freedom in the heart of the Middle East would be a major defeat for the cause of terror. This collection of coldblooded killers is trying to shake the will of the United States. America will never be intimidated by a bunch of thugs and assassins.

We are aggressively striking the terrorists in Iraq, defeating them there so we do not have to face them in our own cities. Other nations are helping in Iraq, because they understand a free Iraq will make us all more secure. And we're standing with the brave Iraqi citizens as they assume more of their own defense and move towards self-government. These are not easy tasks, but they are essential tasks. We will finish what we have begun, and we will win this important victory in the war against terror.

Our greatest security comes from the advance of human liberty, because free nations do not support terror, free nations do not attack their neighbors, free nations do not threaten the world with weapons of mass terror. Americans believe that freedom is the deepest need and hope of every human heart. I believe that freedom is the future of every nation. I know that freedom is not America's gift to the world; freedom is God's gift to every man and woman in this world.

America also understands that unprecedented influence brings tremendous responsibilities. We have duties in the world. When we see disease and starvation and hopeless poverty, we will not turn away. And that is why, on the continent of Africa, America is committed to bringing the healing power of medicine to the millions of men and women and children suffering with AIDS. This great, powerful nation is leading the world in this incredibly important work of human rescue.

We face challenges here at home, and our actions will prove we're equal to the challenges. I'm going to stay focused on a progrowth economic agenda, one that elevates the entrepreneurial spirit of America, until everybody who wants to work can find a job.

We're keeping our commitment to our country's seniors by strengthening and modernizing Medicare. For years, our seniors have called for a modern Medicare system that provides more choices and prescription drug coverage. For years, the United States Congress did nothing. Finally, the Congress acted. The House and the Senate have approved historic legislation that I look forward to signing soon that will keep this country's promise to our Nation's elderly citizens.

For the sake of our health care system, we need to cut down on the frivolous lawsuits which increase the cost of medicine. People who have been harmed by a bad doc deserve their day in court, yet the system should not reward lawyers who are fishing for a rich settlement. Frivolous lawsuits drive up the cost of health care. They therefore affect the Federal budget. Medical liability reform is a national issue that requires a national solution.

I proposed a good plan to the Congress. The House of Representatives passed a good bill to reform the system. The bill is stuck in the United States Senate. I appreciate the hard work of Senator Specter and Senator Santorum to get the bill to the floor of the United States Senate. Yet it is being blocked. It is time for some of the Members of the United States Senate to understand that no one has ever been healed by a frivolous lawsuit in America. We need medical liability reform now.

I have a responsibility as the President to make sure the judicial system runs well, and I have met that duty. I have nominated superb men and women for the Federal courts, people who will interpret the law, not legislate from the bench. My nominees have been strongly supported by your two United States Senators, yet some Members of the Senate are trying to keep my nominees off the bench by blocking up-or-down votes. Every judicial nominee deserves a fair hearing and an up-or-down vote on the floor of the Senate. It is time for some members of the United

States Senate to stop playing politics with American justice.

This country needs a national energy policy. We need an energy bill out of the United States Congress. I appreciate the hard work in both bodies, but they need to get a bill to my desk. We need to encourage conservation. We need energy efficiency. We need new technologies to help us explore for energy in environmentally friendly ways. But for the sake of economic security and for the sake of national security, this country must become less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

A strong and prosperous nation must also be a compassionate nation. I will continue to advance what I call compassionate conservation, which means we'll apply the best, most efficient, and most innovative ideas to the task of helping our fellow citizens who are in need. There are still millions of men and women who want to end their dependence on the Government and become independent through hard work. I look forward to working with Congress to expand on the success of welfare reform and to help people better prepare themselves and to better find a job and the dignity that comes from working.

Congress should complete the "Citizen Service Act" so more of our citizens can serve their communities and their country. Both Houses should reach agreement on my Faith-Based Initiative. It will help support the armies of compassion that are mentoring our children, caring for the homeless, offering hope to the addicted. America's strength is based upon our religious diversity. People of all faiths have heard a call to help somebody who hurts. Our Government must not fear faith; we must welcome faith into helping solve the intractable problems that face our country.

A compassionate society is one that promotes opportunity for everybody, including the independence that comes from owning something. This administration is working hard to promote an ownership society in America. We want more people owning their own home. We have a minority homeownership gap in America, and I presented plans to help close that gap. We want people owning and managing their own retirement accounts, owning and controlling their own health care accounts. We want more people owning their own small business. This administration understands that when a person owns something, he or she has a vital stake in the future of our country.

A compassionate society is one in which people respect one another, respect their opinions, respect their religious beliefs, and a society in which people take responsibility for the decisions they make. The culture of this country is changing from one that has said, "If it feels good, just go ahead and do it," and "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else," to a culture in which each of us is responsible for the decisions we make. If you're a mom or a dad, you're responsible for loving your child with all your heart. If you don't like the quality of the education in the community in which you live, you're responsible for doing something about it. If you're a CEO in corporate America, you are responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees. In a responsibility society, each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourselves.

The culture of service is strong in America. The culture of responsibility is growing. You know, I started what's called the USA Freedom Corps; it's a chance to encourage Americans to extend a compassionate hand to somebody who hurts. And the response is strong. The charitable organizations in America are growing. I want to thank you for supporting our local charities, thank you for helping people who hurt. You know, the true strength of the country is found in the heart and souls of the American citizens. Policemen and firefighters and people who wear our Nation's uniform are reminding us what it means to sacrifice for something greater than ourselves. Once again the children of America believe in heroes, because they see them every day.

In these challenging times, the world has seen the resolve and the courage of America. And I have been privileged to see the compassion and the character of the American people. All the tests of the last 3 years have come to the right nation. We're a strong country, and we use that strength to defend

the peace. We're an optimistic country, confident in ourselves and in ideals bigger than ourselves. Abroad, we seek to lift up whole nations by spreading freedom. At home, we seek to lift up lives by spreading opportunity to every corner of this country. This is the work that history has set before us. We welcome it, and we know that for our country, the best days lie ahead.

God bless you all. Thank you for coming. Proud you're here.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:58 a.m. at the Westin Convention Center Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Pittsburgh Steelers running back Jerome Bettis; Pennsylvania State Attorney General Mike Fisher; Allegheny County Chief Executive Jim Roddey; and David Girard-diCarlo, Pennsylvania State cochairman, and Leslie Gromis Baker, campaign chairperson for the mid-Atlantic region, Bush-Cheney '04, Inc.

Remarks Honoring 2003 NASCAR Drivers

December 2, 2003

The President. Good to see you all. Thanks for coming. Welcome. Please be seated. Thanks for coming. Welcome to the White House, and congratulations on a great NASCAR Winston Cup Series. We're honored you all are here. I see a lot of the "Bubbas" who work in my administration who have shown up. [*Laughter*] I wonder why. I've hosted champions from many sports here at the White House—first time, however, we ever parked stock cars in the South Lawn. [*Laughter*] We're proud you all are here.

I'm proud to be here with such an outstanding group of NASCAR drivers. I didn't realize you all dressed up so well—[*laughter*]—with the NASCAR owners, the crew members, and the executives of this fine sport.

I appreciate the Members of Congress who are here. I see Senator John Kyl of Arizona. I didn't realize you were such a race fan, Senator—helped us get the Medicare bill through the Senate, by the way. I appreciate Bart Gordon of Tennessee for joining us. Congressman Mac Collins—I knew he was a race car fan. It's good to see you, Mac.

Representative Collins. [*Inaudible*]

The President Yes. You are a "Bubba." [*Laughter*] I'm glad you all are here. I thought you might be here just because you were looking for a fast ride back up to the Capitol.

I want to congratulate Matt Kenseth, the 2003 Winston Cup points champion. Like all champs, he succeeded because of his dedication and his hard work. He started racing late-model cars in his home State of Wisconsin before he was 20 years old. He worked his way up the ranks to the Busch Series. I kind of like the name of that series. [*Laughter*] This year, he drove his number 17 Ford all the way to the Winston Cup title. He's a great driver, and, like me, he married well. We appreciate Katie coming here today. Thanks for being here, Katie.

But every NASCAR fan knows that behind the—the talent behind the wheel is not just enough, that NASCAR is a team sport. When you hear these drivers talk after a victory, they're always talking about how well their team performed, how well the team did. He had a great group in the pit, obviously—otherwise, he wouldn't be the champion—starting with the cat in the hat, the team owner, Jack Roush. Thank you for coming, Jack, and congratulations. Every team needs a strong crew chief, and Matt had a great one in Robbie Reiser. Robbie, thank you for coming. I appreciate you being here. Some of the other members of the crew are here as well. Where are they, Robbie? Where are the members of your crew? Well, they must have—couldn't pass the security check. Let them in the gate. [*Laughter*] But all of you have earned your right—earned the right to call yourselves champs. I congratulate you. We welcome you to the White House. I'm really proud of the job you've done.

One of the reasons for the success of NASCAR is the strength of its leadership. I want the thank Mike Helton, who is the president of NASCAR, for coming today. Mike, you're doing a great job.

But there's no doubt NASCAR is where it is today because of a great entrepreneur, a person who understands the consumer, the customer, and built this sport up to what it is, and that is Bill France, Jr. We're honored you're here, Bill. Thank you for coming. I

appreciate Betty Jane coming as well. It's great to see you again, Betty Jane. I'm also so pleased that Lesa Kennedy, who is the president of the Daytona International Speedway, is with us; Brian France, who's taken over his dad's position at NASCAR. You know, there's nothing wrong, Brian, with following your father's footsteps. [*Laughter*] The France family is a great American family, and we're really proud you're here.

We're proud some of the members of the board from NASCAR are with us today. I'm glad my friend, former Governor Bill Graves, is here. Thank you all for coming.

We also have some former Winston Cup champs—Tony Stewart—I had the honor of greeting Tony at the Oval Office last year. Bill Elliott is with us. Some pretty fine Texans are up here too—the Labonte boys, Bobby and Terry—from Corpus, right? That's what I thought. You still from Corpus? They still claim you in Corpus. Yes. [*Laughter*]

Mark Martin is not on the stage with us, but he's one of the fine drivers on the NASCAR circuit. Mark, we're proud you're here. Thank you for coming. Some of the young drivers are with us today. These are the ones that are attracting some of the young fans to this fantastic sport—Jimmie Johnson and Dale Earnhardt, Jr., Kevin Harvick, and Ryan Newman. I'm really glad you all are here. Thanks for coming. It's such a thrill to have you on the South Lawn.

NASCAR is one of the fastest growing sports in America today; 75 million Americans now count themselves as fans. And NASCAR has followers around the world who listen to your races in 21 languages and a hundred different countries. It's a fantastic international sport. And it's easy to figure out why the sport is so popular. The competition is intense, the drivers and their crews are skillful, the finishes are oftentimes dramatic.

NASCAR has a proud history dating back to 1948. And today, you're carrying on the tradition set by some of the great legends of American sport, Richard Petty and Cale Yarborough and Dale Earnhardt.

It's a time of change for NASCAR. It's one of the reasons why the sport is continuing to attract a lot of fans. Yet the values long held by the drivers in this sport endure. It's one of the things I like most about NASCAR. You know the work you do away from the track is really what makes the NASCAR drivers the true champs. After Hurricane Isabelle and the California wildfires, Jimmie Johnson worked with Lowe's and the American Red Cross to raise money for the victims for those disasters. Tony Stewart donated $1 million to the Petty family for the Victory Junction Gang Camp, which is a great facility in North Carolina where seriously ill children can have fun while undergoing treatment. Jeff Gordon has run a foundation to benefit children and families in need. These champs are champs on the racetrack, and they're champs off the racetrack, for which this country is grateful.

I also appreciate the strong support that NASCAR's drivers and crew members and executives continue to give to our Armed Forces. By reminding your millions of fans that America's heroes are the men and women who defend our Nation, you're reminding us all about the importance of serving a cause greater than ourself.

I want to thank you all for coming today. I want to congratulate you all for being such great champs. Good luck in the upcoming year. May God bless you all, and may God continue to bless our great country. Thanks for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:05 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Jack Roush, owner, Roush Racing; Bill France, Jr., co-vice chairman, NASCAR, his wife, Betty Jane, and their children, Brian France, chief executive officer and chairman of the board, NASCAR, and Lesa France Kennedy, president, International Speedway Corp.; and Bill Graves, member, board of directors, International Speedway Corp.

Remarks on Signing the Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003

December 3, 2003

Thanks for coming. Thanks for finally inviting me to the Department of Agriculture. [*Laughter*] It's an honor to be here. I'm really glad to be here as our Government takes a major step forward in protecting America's forests.

Almost 750 million acres of forest stand tall and beautiful across the 50 States. We have a responsibility to be good stewards of our forests. That's a solemn responsibility. And the legislation I sign today carries forward this ethic of stewardship. With the Healthy Forest Restoration Act, we will help to prevent catastrophic wildfires; we'll help save lives and property; and we'll help protect our forests from sudden and needless destruction.

I appreciate so very much Secretaries Veneman and Norton for working hard on this issue. These two members of my Cabinet are doing a great job, and I'm proud that they're in my Cabinet. I want to thank Mark Rey. I also want to thank Dale Bosworth, who is the Chief of the Forest Service. From the Interior Department, I want to thank Rebecca Watson and Lynn Scarlett for their hard work and their good work for these important issues. I want to thank the officials and employees of the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Interior for doing a great job on behalf of the American citizens. Thank you for your dedication and your work on behalf of all of us.

I appreciate the Hotshot team members from the great State of California. These are the folks in the yellow shirts. I spent some time with the Hotshot members as a—this summer in California, last summer in Arizona, a time in Oregon, Washington State. These are brave, brave citizens. These are fantastic citizens in the country. We're proud to be standing with them up here.

I appreciate the Members of Congress who have joined us, strong Members who brought some common sense to what had been an acrimonious debate, who listened to the people—[*applause*]—Members who listen to the people, who know what they're talking about, and came up with a good piece of legislation, starting with Senator Thad Cochran, who's the chairman of the Committee of Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry. Thad has done a fabulous job of getting this bill out of the United States Senate, along with Max Baucus and Mike Crapo—Baucus being of—from Montana and Crapo being from Idaho, great Members of the Senate, and thank you all for coming. I appreciate your coming. We have two other Members of the Senate with us here. From the West, Kyl and Smith—Gordon Smith from Oregon. I appreciate you two coming.

From the House, onstage are three Members: the chairman of the Committee of Agriculture, Bob Goodlatte, from the great State of Virginia; Scott McInnis, who is the sponsor of the Healthy Forest bill—[*applause*]—McInnis is having a family reunion in Washington. [*Laughter*] Richard Pombo is the chairman of the Committee on Resources. We've got Greg Walden and Sherry Boehlert. We've got the finest fighter pilot in Navy history with us, Duke Cunningham. We've got Renzi from Arizona. Thank you all for coming, fine Members, and appreciate you getting this bill out.

I want to thank all the State and local officials who have come here. You understand the importance of getting a good piece of legislation out of the Congress. See, you live right there where the fires occur, and I want to thank you for your help, thank you for helping bring some common sense to Washington, DC. I appreciate the representatives of the conservation groups who have worked in a constructive way to help change the attitude inside the halls of the United States Congress so we can work together to get some good legislation out to protect our forests. I want to thank the business groups who are here, who spent time making sure this legislation makes sense.

I understand Chuck Leavell is here, of the Rolling Stones. I appreciate Chuck being here. He's the keyboard player. And he also has—they tell me he's a tree raiser, a tree farmer, whatever you call them. [*Laughter*] Glad you're here. Thanks for coming, Chuck. I appreciate you being here.

For decades, Government policies have allowed large amounts of underbrush and small trees to collect at the base of our forests. The motivations of this approach were good. But our failure to maintain the forests has had dangerous consequences and devastating consequences. The uncontrolled growth left by years of neglect chokes off nutrients from trees and provides a breeding ground for insects and disease.

As we have seen this year and in other years, such policy creates the conditions for

devastating wildfires. Today, about 190 million acres of forest and woodlands around the country are vulnerable to destruction. Overgrown brush and trees can serve as kindling, turning small fires into large, raging blazes that burn with such intensity that the trees literally explode.

I saw that firsthand when we were flying over Oregon, magnificent trees just exploding as we choppered by. The resulting devastation damages the habitats of endangered species, causes flooding and soil erosion, harms air quality, oftentimes ruins water supplies. These catastrophic fires destroy homes and businesses. They put lives at risk, especially the lives of the brave men and women who are on the frontline of fighting these fires.

In 2 years' time, fires throughout the country have burned nearly 11 million acres. We've seen the cost that wildfires bring in the loss of 28 firefighters this year alone. In the fires that burned across southern California this fall, 22 civilians also lost their lives as whole neighborhoods vanished into flames. And we ask for God's blessings on the family members who grieve the loss and on the friends who mourn for their comrades.

We're seeing the tragic consequences brought by years of unwise forest policy. We face a major national challenge, and we're acting together to solve the challenge. The Healthy Forest Initiative I announced last year marked a clear and decisive change in direction. Instead of enduring season after season of devastating fires, my administration acted to remove the causes of severe wildfires. We worked within our existing legal authority to thin out and remove forest undergrowth before disaster struck. We emphasized thinning projects in critical areas. And since the beginning of 2002, we've restored almost 5 million acres of overgrown forest and rangeland.

And that's pretty good progress. But it's not enough progress. And so, thanks to the United States Congress, thanks to their action, and thanks for passing the Healthy Forest Restoration Act—we now can expand the work to a greater scale that the dangers of wildfires demand. In other words, we were confined. The Congress acted in a bipartisan spirit in order to enable this administration to work harder to do what we can do to prevent wildfires from taking place.

The bill expedites the environmental review process so we can move forward more quickly on projects that restore forests to good health. We don't want our intentions bogged down by regulations. We want to get moving. When we see a problem, this Government needs to be able to move. Congress wisely enabled a review process to go forward but also wisely recognizes sometimes the review process bogs us down and things just don't get done.

The new law directs courts to consider the long-term risks that could result if thinning projects are delayed. And that's an important reform, and I want to thank you all for that. It places reasonable time limits on litigation after the public has had an opportunity to comment and a decision has been made. You see, no longer will essential forest health projects be delayed by lawsuits that drag on year after year after year.

This act of Congress sets the right priorities for the management of our Nation's forests, focusing on woodlands that are closest to communities and on places where the risk to wildlife and the environment is the greatest. It enforces high standards of stewardship so that we can ensure that we're returning our forests to more natural conditions and maintaining a full range of forest types. It enables collaboration between community groups and private stewardship organizations and all levels of government before projects are chosen. This law will not prevent every fire, but it is an important step forward, a vital step to make sure we do our duty to protect our Nation's forests.

The principles behind the Healthy Forest Initiative were not invented in the White House and, truthfully, not invented in the Congress. They are founded on the experience of scientists, forestry experts, and, as importantly, the firefighters who know what they're talking about. Chief Tom O'Keefe of the California Department of Forestry is among those who have seen the consequences of misguided forest policy. He put it this way: "A lot of people have been well-intentioned. They saved trees, but they lost the forest." We want to save the forest.

This bill was passed because Members of Congress looked at sound science, did the best they could to get all the politics out of the way for good legislation. Members from both parties came together, people from different regions of the country. A broad range of people who care about our forests were listened to, whether they be conservationists, or resource managers, people from the South, people from the West, people from New York. You see, we all share duties of stewardship. And today we shared in an important accomplishment.

For the good of our forests and for the good of our people, I'm honored to sign this important piece of legislation. I'm honored to be here to sign the Healthy Forest Restoration Act of 2003.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:40 a.m. at the U.S. Department of Agriculture. In his remarks, he referred to Under Secretary of Agriculture for Natural Resources and Environment Mark Rey. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of these remarks. H.R. 1904, approved December 3, was assigned Public Law No. 108–148.

Statement on Signing the 21st Century Nanotechnology Research and Development Act

December 3, 2003

Today, I have signed S. 189, the "21st Century Nanotechnology Research and Development Act." The Act authorizes appropriations for research in nanoscience, nanoengineering, and nanotechnology research and other related activities.

Several provisions of the Act, including sections 2(d)(2), 3(c)(1), 4(d), and 5(d), purport to call for executive branch officials to submit to the Congress proposals for legislation, including funding legislation. The executive branch shall implement these provisions in a manner consistent with the President's constitutional authority to supervise the unitary executive branch and to recommend for the consideration of the Congress such measures as the President judges necessary and expedient.

The executive branch shall construe section 2(b)(4)(E) of the Act in a manner consistent with the Government's obligation under the Due Process Clause of the Fifth Amendment to the Constitution to ensure equal protection of the laws.

George W. Bush

The White House,
December 3, 2003.

NOTE: S. 189, approved December 3, was assigned Public Law No. 108–153. An original was not available for verification of the content of this statement.

Remarks Prior to Discussions With King Abdullah II of Jordan and an Exchange With Reporters

December 4, 2003

President Bush. We're going to have some opening statements, and then I'll take a couple of questions—two questions. The Jordanian press may want to ask a question.

First, Your Majesty, thanks for coming. It's great to have you back. I view His Majesty as one of our really close friends in the world. You know, I went to London recently and gave a speech about reform and reform in the Middle East and the possibilities of governments that adhere to rule of law and transparency and women's rights and economic freedom. And Your Majesty, you're doing just that. I'm proud of your leadership. It's—you're a modern leader with a big heart and a vision for what is best for your people.

I also want to thank you for your very strong support in our mutual desire to bring peace to the Middle East. We made a tough decision when it came to Iraq, and Your Majesty, you stood with us. And we made the right decision when it came to Iraq, because Iraq will be free and will be peaceful. And that's in your interests, and it's in our interests, and it's in the world's interests that we succeed.

I look forward to discussing with you a wide range of issues of our—of mutual concern. And I look forward to your wise counsel and advice.

King Abdullah II. Thank you, sir. Well, Mr. President, again, it's always a pleasure to see you and to be back here in Washington. I'm very grateful for your support for

the region, what you're trying to do to bring peace and stability for all of us in the Middle East—Iraq, the Israelis, the Palestinians. And so I'm looking forward to our discussions today, and see how we can best bring hope to all of the people of our part of the world.

And the President has always been very courageous in trying to do the right thing and to push for a dialog and hope for all of us in the Middle East. And I'm very appreciative.

President Bush. Thanks for coming.

We'll answer a couple of questions, starting with this fellow right there, Scott [Scott Lindlaw, Associated Press].

Steel Tariffs

Q. Thank you, Mr. President. Are you going to repeal all the steel tariffs today?

President Bush. I am making a decision—let me—the decision I make will be based upon my strong belief that America's consumers, the American economy is better off with a world that trades freely and a world that trades fairly. And I listened to an International Trade Commission report about the effects that steel imports were having upon our important industry. I acted. I acted to give the steel industry time to adjust. I acted in time for us to say to the world that we will trade, but we want to trade in a fair way. And the decision will be announced here shortly.

Discussion With Prime Minister Blair

Q. Did you talk to Mr. Blair about it today?

President Bush. No, it didn't come up today with Prime Minister Blair. I did talk with the Prime Minister today. Let's see, you're not the only guy asking questions throughout this thing, but——

Q. No.

President Bush. ——it's good that you recognize that. I did talk to the Prime Minister. We talked about our—we talked about Iraq. We talked about NATO, and we had a good discussion. I talk to him about once a week, maybe once every 2 weeks. His Majesty just was with the Prime Minister.

King Abdullah II. Yes, the day before yesterday.

President Bush. Steady friend of ours, a steady friend of Jordan's as well.

Anybody here from the Jordanian press that you would like to call on?

Roadmap for Peace

Q. Your Majesty, given some of the recent events, such as the Palestinians' factions are meeting in Cairo, Geneva Accords, and the Palestinian—proposals, do you feel that there is hope to revive the negotiations? What is your next step to revive the roadmap?

King Abdullah II. Well, the President has always been out front in trying to move the process forward. There is a lot of difficulties on the ground at the moment, as we know, but we've all been working very hard behind the scenes to encourage the Palestinian Prime Minister to be able to have the dialog with the Israelis. We believe that there will be, I hope, some small steps on the ground that move the process forward. We haven't given up on the peace process. The President has been very dedicated from day one. We appreciate his support. But it's going to be a tough road ahead for all of us.

President Bush. Steven [Steve Holland, Reuters].

Q. The Geneva Accord, do you think some of these proposals should be included in an overall peace agreement? And why is Secretary Powell meeting with these people?

President Bush. Everybody knows where I stand. I gave a speech right here in Rose Garden in June of 2002. I laid out what I believe is necessary to achieve peace in the Middle East. It starts with having a Palestinian state that is at peace with Israel, a Palestinian state based upon democratic principles, a Palestinian state which recognizes the hopes and aspirations of the Palestinian people, and a Palestinian state with leadership which is committed to defeating and dismantling the terrorist organizations who are trying to prevent a Palestinian state from emerging.

I also talked about the need for the Israelis to keep in mind that if they support a Palestinian state, which they have told me they do, that the conditions on the ground must be such for a Palestinian state to be able to emerge. And that's why we're continuing to talk to them about the illegal settlements and outposts—illegal outposts and settlements as well as the fence.

As well nations in the neighborhood must take responsibility. The King and I have spent a lot of time talking about this subject. He understands fully what I'm talking about. I want to remind you that it was in Jordan where His Majesty hosted us. I stood up with His Majesty as well as Prime Minister Sharon and then Prime Minister Abu Mazen and made a public declaration that we were prepared to work together for the creation of a Palestinian state. Abu Mazen has since been shoved aside, and the process stalled. What the Palestinians need is leadership willing to remain committed to the aspirations of their people and bold enough to stand up and fight off the terrorists' organizations. And His Majesty and I will be glad to work with such leaders as they emerge.

Geneva Accords

Q. This is a productive process, the Geneva Accords and Secretary Powell's meeting?

President Bush. Well, I think it's productive, so long as they adhere to the principles I have just outlined. And that is, we must fight off terror, that there must be security, and there must be the emergence of a Palestinian state that is democratic and free.

And it's—the position of this Government is clear, and it's firm. We appreciate people discussing peace. We just want to make sure people understand that the principles to peace are clear.

Thank you all for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:07 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom; Prime Minister Ariel Sharon of Israel; and former Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) of the Palestinian Authority. King Abdullah II referred to Prime Minister Ahmed Korei of the Palestinian Authority. A tape was not available for verification of the content of these remarks.

Remarks on Signing the Fair and Accurate Credit Transactions Act of 2003

December 4, 2003

Thank you all for coming. Please be seated. Thanks. Good morning, everybody. Thanks for coming to the Roosevelt Room. Today we're taking important steps to ensure that all Americans of every income and background have fair access to credit.

For our economy, reliable access to credit and capital is essential to growth and prosperity. For individuals, a chance to get ahead and to make a better life often depends on building credit. So many decisions, like buying a home or financing a car or owning a small business, are made easier by good credit. The bill I'm about to sign will help make sure that hard-working, law-abiding citizens are treated fairly when they apply for credit.

This bill also confronts the problem of identity theft. A growing number of Americans are victimized by criminals who assume their identities and cause havoc in their financial affairs. With this legislation, the Federal Government is protecting our citizens by taking the offensive against identity theft.

I appreciate the fact that I'm joined up here by the Secretary of the Treasury, John Snow, and Tim Muris, who is the Chairman of the Federal Trade Commission. Muris is responsible for writing the regulations to make sure that the intention of the Congress is met.

And speaking about the Congress, I want to thank the Members of the Congress, both Republicans and Democrats, who are here to join in the bill signing, good, honorable Members who have worked hard to protect our citizens. I appreciate Senator Paul Sarbanes for joining us today. I'm honored that Senator Bob Bennett has joined us as well, as well as Maria Cantwell and Elizabeth Dole. Thank you, Senators, for coming. Thanks for your good work on this. I also want to thank Richard Shelby for his good work. He's not with us today, but Shelby gets some credit. [*Laughter*] From the House—[*laughter*]—Congressman Oxley—I appreciate you, Mr. Chairman—Paul Gillmor, Spencer Bachus—thanks for coming, Spence. I appreciate you sponsoring this piece of legislation. Steve LaTourette and Darlene Hooley are here. Thank you all for coming.

Again, I want to again congratulate the Congress for working on this important piece of legislation and exceeding expectations, I

might add. At least you've exceeded the expectations of the administration on this bill. [*Laughter*]

The legislation, the Fair and Accurate Credit Transactions Act of 2003, carries forward the progress this Nation has made in recent years to help qualified Americans get fair access to credit. Before 1996, there were no uniform rules on borrower information and credit reports. Lenders did not always have consistent and full information about potential borrowers. Lenders too often made broad assumptions and decisions about categories of people rather than looking at individuals and their personal credit histories.

Too often, lenders assumed the worst. And therefore, people with lower incomes and immigrants with little or no credit history, people who lived in certain neighborhoods had a more difficult time getting affordable loans. And that's not fair, and it's not right, and it does not reflect the spirit of this country.

And so the Congress wisely acted. In 1996, Congress set uniform national standards on credit reporting. Credit histories are now more complete and thorough, and the lending process is fairer. Many Americans have been able to obtain loans that they would not have had otherwise, and that's important. According to estimates, over the last 7 years, more than 1 million men and women have obtained new or refinanced mortgages that would have been denied if there had not been a fair national standard.

One of them is here today. I appreciate Shonelle Blake coming. She's got the toughest job in America. She's a single mom. She has two 4-year-olds, mom of twins. I know something about twins. [*Laughter*] In the early 1990s, Shonelle set herself two goals—she set high goals. One was to buy a house, and the other was to start a business. She made sure her credit was in order. She went to the HOPE Center in Los Angeles—I know something about there since I've been there myself—to help get a downpayment on a home. One year later, she got another loan to start her own insurance business.

Shonelle is building a life of independence and success, in part because a loan was given to her based on her own merit. Because we had a national standard, she was able to get a loan. Because Congress did the right thing in 1996, this entrepreneur and mother was able to realize a dream. The national credit standards that help ensure that the lenders considered each applicant on her merits are what made the loan possible.

John Bryant, who's with us—and it's good to see you again, John—of Operation HOPE, he's what we call a social entrepreneur, by the way. [*Laughter*] He has heard the call to help people like Shonelle realize her dreams—said this: He said, "Shonelle would have been rejected. She wouldn't have been a homeowner, and she wouldn't have been a businessowner." That's what John said. And so the fair standards are important. The national standard was an important act that you all did, and I want to thank you for working on it in 1996.

See, the bill I sign today will make the national fair credit standards permanent. Those standards were set to expire, the '96—the good of the '96 act was going away. And then the Congress stepped up and acted for the sake of the Shonelles of the world. And now the credit standards are a permanent part of the legislative history of the country. And I want to thank you for that. It's the right thing to do, and I appreciate your leadership. See, we're ensuring that lenders make decisions based upon the full and fair credit histories of each person and not on the categories that can lead to discrimination.

And as we help people gain access to credit, we're strengthening the protections that help consumers build and keep a good credit history. That good record is ruined when criminals steal identities and run up purchases under stolen names. Like other forms of stealing, identity theft leaves the victim feeling terribly violated, and undoing the damage caused by identity theft can take months.

Michael Berry is with us today. Thank you for coming, Michael. In January of 2002, Michael was applying for a credit line increase. He'd always paid his bills in a timely manner. He's a good citizen. But his application was rejected. They told him that he had taken out too many credit cards recently. It came as quite a surprise to Michael, since it wasn't true. He discovered that someone had stolen his financial identity. He made countless calls

to credit bureaus and tracked down credit card purchases he had not made. He even found the address of the person who had taken out the cards. He closed the credit card accounts as fast as he could, but applications for more credit in his name were being made every day. And many were getting approved. He had to call every credit card company to get each card canceled before it was issued.

Nearly 2 years later, Michael is still fighting the effects of the fraud. The system was broken. Michael is living testimony to what I'm saying when I said the system was broken, and Congress acted. I want to thank you all for stepping up and doing the right thing here.

See, in an age when information about individuals can be found easily, sold easily, abused easily, Government must act to protect individual privacy. And with this new law, we're taking action. First, under this law, we're giving every consumer the right to get a copy of his or her credit report free of charge every year. That's important. The credit report is more than a record of past actions; it has great influence over a person's financial future. People should be able to check their credit report for accuracy and to challenge any errors. The bill does just that.

Second, this law will help prevent identity theft before it occurs, by requiring merchants to delete all but the last five digits of a credit card number on store receipts. Many restaurants and merchants have already adopted this practice. All will now do so.

Won't they, Tim? [*Laughter*] Just making sure he was awake. [*Laughter*]

Chairman Muris. Always. [*Laughter*]

The President. Slips of paper that most people throw away should not hold the key to their savings and financial secrets.

Third, this law will create a national system of fraud detection so that identity theft can be traced and dealt with earlier. Up to now, victims of identity theft have been left to manage the problem themselves—ask Michael—by calling all their credit card companies to shut down each of their accounts. And then the victims must call each of the three major credit rating agencies to report the crime and to protect their credit rating. Under this legislation, victims will only have to make one phone call to receive advice and to set off a nationwide fraud alert. It's an important reform. I appreciate you all for putting this into law. Credit bureaus will then take immediate measures to protect the consumer's credit standing.

And fourth, this law will encourage lenders and credit agencies to take action before a victim even knows an identity crime has occurred. In many cases, identity thieves follow predictable patterns. Bank regulators working with credit agencies will draw up guidelines to identify these patterns and develop methods to stop identity theft before it ever happens.

These practical steps will help consumers protect their credit and their good name. People work hard to build up good credit histories and rely on their credit to move forward in life. Today we're helping to make our credit system fair, fair to all, and to better protect those—better protect people from those who would abuse it.

I'm pleased to sign into law the Fair and Accurate Credit Transactions Act of 2003, a good, solid piece of legislation.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11 a.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to John Bryant, chairman and chief executive officer, Operation HOPE, Inc. H.R. 2622, approved December 4, was assigned Public Law No. 108–159.

Remarks on Lighting the National Christmas Tree

December 4, 2003

Thank you all very much. Welcome to the Christmas Pageant of Peace. This evening we continue a tradition in Washington as we gather to light the National Christmas Tree. Tonight and throughout the Christmas season our thoughts turn to a star in the east, seen 20 centuries ago, and to a light that can guide us still. Laura and I are so pleased to join you in this ceremony, and we thank you all for being here.

It's always good to see Santa. I know you've got a lot of commitments this time of year. [*Laughter*] We also know how Santa gets around: He travels in the dark of night; he arrives unannounced—[*laughter*]—and

he's gone before you know he was there. [*Laughter*] Santa, I can assure you, it's a lot easier on a flying sled than it is on Air Force One. [*Laughter*]

I want to thank Peter Nostrand, the chairman of the Christmas Pageant of Peace, and John Betchkal, the president. I want to thank very much Secretary of the Interior Gale Norton and her staff for helping put this fine event on. I want to thank all the members of my Cabinet who are here. I appreciate Fran Mainella, who's the Director of the National Park Service. I want to thank all the National Park Service employees who work so hard on behalf of the American people.

I want to thank Father Kleinweber for his gracious offering of prayer. I appreciate the musicians—fantastic job tonight. Thank you all for coming. I want to thank the members of the board of the Christmas Pageant of Peace. I want to welcome all the children from the Boys and Girls Clubs from this region for being here.

Also with us this evening are military personnel, including some who have recently returned from duty in Iraq and Afghanistan. I know your families are glad to have you back. They're proud of your service, and so is our country. On behalf of all Americans, welcome home, and job well done.

We also honor all of our fellow Americans serving far away from home during the holidays. Separation from loved ones is especially difficult this time of year. Our people in uniform can know that their families miss them and love them, that millions are praying for them, and that America is grateful for the men and women who serve and defend our country.

The story of Christmas is familiar to us all, and it still holds a sense of wonder and surprise. When the good news came first to a young woman from Nazareth, her response was understandable. She asked, "How can this be?" The news would bring difficulty to her family and suspicion upon herself. Yet, Mary gave her reply, "Be it unto me according to Thy word." The wait for a new king had been long, and the manner of his arrival was not as many had expected. The king's first cries were heard by shepherds and cattle. He was raised by a carpenter's son.

Yet this one humble life lifted the sights of humanity forever. And in His words we hear a voice like no other. Across the generations, the poor have heard words of hope, the proud have heard words of challenge, and the weak and the dying have heard words of assurance. And mankind has been given a message first delivered by angels on a shepherd's field: "Fear not."

As we near Christmas in a time of war, these words bring comfort. We don't know all of God's ways, yet the Christmas story promises that God's purpose is justice and His plan is peace. At times this belief is tested. During the Civil War, Longfellow wrote a poem that later became a part of a Christmas carol, "Hate is strong and mocks the song of peace on Earth, good will to men."

That poem also reminds us that hate is not the final word: "Then pealed the bells more loud and deep, 'God is not dead, nor doth He sleep, the wrong shall fail, the right prevail, with peace on Earth, good will to men.'"

And now as an expression of our own hope for peace in this Christmas season, we light the national tree. Maggie Stuempfle and Andre Joyner are with us here. They're members of the Boys and Girls Clubs of America. Laura and I would like to ask Maggie and Andre to come up, and we'll turn on the lights. But I ask you all to join us in a national count down, starting with five, four, three, two, one.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:55 p.m. on the Ellipse during the annual Christmas Pageant of Peace. In his remarks, he referred to Father Dennis Kleinweber, pastor, St. Philomena Catholic Church, East Cleveland, OH.

Statement on Signing the Proclamation To Provide for the Termination of Action Taken With Regard to Imports of Certain Steel Products

December 4, 2003

Today, I signed a proclamation ending the temporary steel safeguard measures I put in place in March 2002. Prior to that time, steel prices were at 20-year lows, and the U.S. International Trade Commission found that a surge in imports to the U.S. market was

causing serious injury to our domestic steel industry. I took action to give the industry a chance to adjust to the surge in foreign imports and to give relief to the workers and communities that depend on steel for their jobs and livelihoods. These safeguard measures have now achieved their purpose, and as a result of changed economic circumstances it is time to lift them.

The U.S. steel industry wisely used the 21 months of breathing space we provided to consolidate and restructure. The industry made progress increasing productivity, lowering production costs, and making America more competitive with foreign steel producers. Steel producers and workers have negotiated new groundbreaking labor agreements that allow greater flexibility and increase job stability. The Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation has guaranteed the pensions of eligible steelworkers and retirees and relieved the high pension costs that burdened some companies. My jobs-and-growth plan has also created more favorable economic conditions for the industry, and the improving economy will help further stimulate demand.

To keep the positive momentum going, we will continue our steel import licensing and monitoring program so that my administration can quickly respond to future import surges that could unfairly damage the industry. We will continue negotiations with our trading partners through the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development to establish new and stronger disciplines on subsidies that governments grant to their steel producers. We will continue to pursue economic policies that create the conditions for steel producers, steel consumers—who rely on steel to produce goods ranging from refrigerators to auto parts—and other U.S. manufacturers to succeed.

I strongly believe that America's workers can compete with anyone in the world as long as we have a fair and level playing field. Free trade opens foreign markets to American products and creates jobs for American workers, and an integral part of our commitment to free trade is our commitment to enforcing our trade laws. I am pleased the steel industry seized the opportunity we provided to regain its competitiveness and assist steelworkers and their communities. As a result, U.S. steel companies are now once again well-positioned to compete both at home and globally.

Proclamation 7741—To Provide for the Termination of Action Taken With Regard to Imports of Certain Steel Products

December 4, 2003

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

1. Proclamation 7529 of March 5, 2002, implemented actions (safeguard measures) of a type described in section 203(a)(3)(A) and (B) of the Trade Act of 1974, as amended (19 U.S.C. 2253(a)(3)(A) and (B)) (the "Trade Act"), with respect to imports of certain flat steel (consisting of slabs, plate, hot-rolled steel, cold-rolled steel, and coated steel), hot-rolled bar, cold-finished bar, rebar, certain welded tubular products, carbon and alloy fittings, stainless steel bar, stainless steel rod, tin mill products, and stainless steel wire, as defined in paragraph 7 of Proclamation 7529 (collectively, "certain steel products").

2. In Proclamation 7529 and Proclamation 7576 of July 3, 2002, I authorized the United States Trade Representative (USTR) to further consider any request for exclusion of a particular product and upon finding that a particular product should be excluded, to modify the provisions of the Harmonized Tariff Schedule of the United States (HTS) created by the Annex to Proclamation 7529 to exclude such particular product from the pertinent safeguard measure established in Proclamation 7529. Pursuant to that authorization, the USTR published four notices of exclusions of products from the safeguard measures in the *Federal Register* at 67 *Fed. Reg.* 16484 (April 5, 2002), 67 *Fed. Reg.* 46221 (July 12, 2002), 67 *Fed. Reg.* 56182 (August 30, 2002), and 68 *Fed. Reg.* 15494 (March 31, 2003). The USTR also published notice in the *Federal Register* of technical corrections to that Annex.

3. In a Memorandum of March 5, 2002 (67 *Fed. Reg.* 10593), pursuant to section 203(a)(3)(I) of the Trade Act (19 U.S.C. 2253(a)(3)(I)), I instructed the Secretary of the Treasury and the Secretary of Commerce to establish a system of import licensing to facilitate the monitoring of imports of certain steel products. To provide for efficient and fair administration of this action, pursuant to section 203(g) of the Trade Act, I instructed the Secretary of Commerce to publish regulations in the *Federal Register* establishing such a system of import licensing (the "Licensing System"). Those regulations were published on December 31, 2002, at 67 *Fed. Reg.* 79845.

4. Section 204(a) of the Trade Act (19 U.S.C. 2254(a)) requires the United States International Trade Commission (ITC) to monitor developments with respect to the domestic industry while action taken under section 203 remains in effect. If the initial period of a safeguard action exceeds 3 years, then the ITC must submit to the President a report on the results of such monitoring not later than the date that is the mid-point of the initial period of the safeguard action. The ITC report in Investigation Number TA–204–9 was submitted on September 19, 2003.

5. Section 204(b)(1)(A) of the Trade Act (19 U.S.C. 2254(b)(1)(A)) authorizes the President to reduce, modify, or terminate a safeguard action if, after taking into account any report or advice submitted by the ITC and after seeking the advice of the Secretary of Commerce and the Secretary of Labor, he determines that changed circumstances warrant such reduction, modification, or termination. The President's determination may be made, *inter alia*, on the basis that the effectiveness of the action taken under section 203 has been impaired by changed economic circumstances.

6. In view of the information provided in the ITC report, and having sought advice from the Secretary of Commerce and the Secretary of Labor, I determine that the effectiveness of the actions taken under section 203(a)(3)(A) and (B) of the Trade Act with respect to imports of certain steel products and the exclusions from and technical corrections to the coverage of Proclamation 7529 has been impaired by changed economic circumstances. Accordingly, I have determined, pursuant to section 204(b)(1)(A)(ii), that termination of the actions taken under section 203(a)(3)(A) and (B) set forth in Proclamation 7529 taken with respect to certain steel imports is warranted. The action taken under section 203(a)(3)(I) set forth in the Memorandum of March 5, 2002, requiring the licensing and monitoring of imports of certain steel products remains in effect and shall not terminate until the earlier of March 21, 2005, or such time as the Secretary of Commerce establishes a replacement program.

7. Section 604 of the Trade Act (19 U.S.C. 2483) authorizes the President to embody in the HTS the substance of the relevant provisions of that Act, and of other acts affecting import treatment, and actions thereunder, including the removal, modification, continuance, or imposition of any rate of duty or other import restriction.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, acting under the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, including, but not limited to sections 204 and 604 of the Trade Act and section 301 of title 3, United States Code, do proclaim that:

(1) The HTS is modified as provided in the Annex to this proclamation.

(2) The United States Trade Representative is authorized, upon his determination that the Secretary of Commerce has established a replacement program pursuant to paragraph 6 of this proclamation, to terminate the action under section 203(a)(3)(I) of the Trade Act set forth in the Memorandum of March 5, 2002, and the Licensing System and to publish notice of this determination and action in the *Federal Register*.

(3) Any provisions of previous proclamations and Executive Orders that are inconsistent with the actions taken in this proclamation are superseded to the extent of such inconsistency.

(4) The modifications to the HTS made by this proclamation shall be effective with respect to goods entered, or withdrawn from warehouse for consumption, on or after 12:01 a.m., eastern standard time, December 5, 2003.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this fourth day of December, in the year of our Lord two thousand three, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-eighth.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 9:22 a.m., December 5, 2003]

NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on December 8.

Remarks at a Bush-Cheney Luncheon in Baltimore, Maryland

December 5, 2003

Thank you all very much. Thanks for coming. Thanks for the warm welcome. Thanks for the bumper sticker. [*Laughter*] Thanks for making this such a successful event. Thanks for laying the foundation for what is going to be a victory in the State of Maryland in 2004.

I want to thank you for your contributions. I also want to thank you for the contribution of time you're going to make. [*Laughter*] We want you to help energize the grassroots, to put up the signs, and to get on the phones and to mail the letters, all reminding your fellow citizens that we have a duty to vote in America; we have an obligation in a democracy to participate.

You know, the political season is going to come in its own time, and I'm getting ready. I'm loosening up. [*Laughter*] But I've got a job to do. Right now, I'm focused on the people's business, and there's a lot on the agenda. I will continue to work hard to earn the confidence of all Americans by keeping this Nation secure and strong and prosperous and free.

Laura sends her best. I'm sorry she's not with me. She is a fabulous wife and mom. She's doing a great job as our First Lady. I'm incredibly proud of her.

Fortunately, my favorite sister came—[*laughter*]—well, my only sister. I love Doro. A brother could have no finer sister than Dorothy Koch. Thank you for coming.

I appreciate your Governor. He is a livewire—[*laughter*]—which is what this State needed. I love his attitude. He never forgot his roots, but he's an incurable optimist as well, because he brings some common sense to the Governor's office. He's doing a fine job. I'm proud to be here with the first lady, Kendel, as well. Thank you, Kendel.

I'm also proud to be with Michael—Michael Steele, the Lieutenant Governor, and Andrea. I thank them for their service and for working with the Ehrlichs to set such a positive tone for the great State of Maryland. Thank you, Lieutenant Governor, for coming.

Congressman Roscoe Bartlett is with us today. Congressman, thank you for coming. I know there's a lot of State and local officials who are here. Thank you all for coming today. I appreciate you coming. When I'm talking about energizing the grassroots, I'm talking to you. [*Laughter*] We need you to get into your districts and to energize people and get them to vote. If you happen to be a mayor, my only advice is to fill the potholes. [*Laughter*]

My campaign is going to be run by a fellow named Ken Mehlman. I just had to mention him. You know why? Because his mother and dad are here, and I appreciate them coming. You raised a good man in Ken Mehlman. My friend Mercer Reynolds is with us. He's the national finance chairman. Dick Hug is the State finance chairman, and Dick, I want to thank you and the team that made this event so successful. Thanks for working very hard, for what you're doing.

Shelly Kamins gets a lot of credit for working hard as well. Shelly, I'm honored to have your friendship and to have your hard work, along with Dick, to make this work. I want to thank all of you all for being here. I really appreciate you taking time to come. I'm proud to have your support.

I want you to tell your friends and neighbors, in the last 3 years, our Nation has acted decisively to confront great challenges. I came to this office to solve problems, not to pass them on to future Presidents and to future generations. I came to seize opportunities, instead of letting them slip away. My administration is meeting the tests of our time.

Terrorists declared war on the United States of America, and war is what they got.

We have captured or killed many of the key leaders of the Al Qaida network, and the rest of them know we're on their trail. In Afghanistan and in Iraq, we gave ultimatums to terror regimes. Those regimes chose defiance, and those regimes are no more. Fifty million people in those two countries once lived under tyranny, and today they live in freedom.

Three years ago, our military was not receiving the resources it needed, and morale was beginning to suffer. So we increased the defense budgets to prepare for the threats of a new era. And today, no one in the world can question the skill and the strength and the spirit of the United States military.

Three years ago, the economy was in trouble, and a recession was beginning. And then our country was attacked, and some of our fellow citizens in corporate America forgot to tell the truth, and war came upon us, which all affected the people's confidence. But we acted. We passed tough new laws to hold corporate criminals to account. And to get the economy going again, I have twice led the United States Congress to pass historic tax relief for the American people.

When Americans have more take-home pay to spend, to save, or invest, the whole economy grows, and people are more likely to find a job. And so that's why we're returning more money to the people, to help them raise their families. That's why we've reduced taxes on dividends and capital gains, to encourage investment. That is why we're giving small businesses incentives to expand and to hire new people. With all these actions, this administration has laid the foundation for greater prosperity and more jobs across America so every single citizen has a chance to realize the American Dream.

The American economy is strong, and it is getting stronger. Today they've released some more statistics that show the economy is strong. Unemployment dropped from 6 percent to 5.9 percent. More jobs are being created. In the third quarter, our economy grew at an annual rate of 8.2 percent, the fastest pace in nearly 20 years. The Purchasing Managers Index indicates that our manufacturing sector is getting stronger and is growing. The productivity is high. Investment is strong. The home industry is vibrant. The tax relief we passed is working for the American people.

Three years ago, there was a lot of talk about education reform, but there wasn't much action in Washington, DC. So I acted, and called for and the Congress passed the No Child Left Behind Act. With a solid bipartisan majority, we delivered the most dramatic education reforms in a generation. We've increased spending on Title I students at the Federal level. But for the first time, we're asking schools to prove that our children are learning to read and write and add and subtract. We are challenging the soft bigotry of low expectations. We're raising the standards, because we believe very child can learn the basics of reading and math, and we expect every school to teach the basics of reading and math, so not one single child is left behind.

We reorganized the Government and created the Department of Homeland Security to better safeguard our borders and our ports and to better protect the American people. We passed trade promotion authority to open up new markets for Maryland's entrepreneurs and manufacturers and farmers. We passed budget agreements to help maintain spending discipline in Washington, DC. On issue after issue, this administration has acted on principle, has kept its word, and has made progress for the American people.

The Congress gets a lot of credit for the achievements. I appreciate working with the Speaker and Majority Leader Frist. These are two fine men, good leaders. We're working hard to change the tone in Washington. There's too much needless politics and endless backbiting and the zero-sum attitude. The best way to defeat that attitude is to focus on results, is to do the people's business and deliver. And that's what we're working hard to do.

And those are the kind of people I've asked to serve in my administration, by the way. I've attracted fine, fine people to serve the American people, good, honorable, decent Americans from all walks of life. Our country has had no finer Vice President than Dick Cheney. Mother may have a second opinion. [*Laughter*]

In 3 years, we have come far. In 3 years, we've done a lot for the people, but our work

is only beginning. I have set great goals worthy of this great Nation. First, America is committed to expanding the realm of freedom and peace for our own security and for the benefit of the world. And second, in our own country, we must work for a society that is prosperous and compassionate so every single citizen can realize the great potential, the human potential, the God-given potential, and the great promise of this country. It is clear that the future of freedom and peace depend on the actions of America. This Nation is freedom's home and freedom's defender. We welcome this charge of history, and we are keeping it.

The war on terror continues. The enemies of freedom are not idle, and neither are we. This country will not rest; we will not stop; we will not tire until this danger to civilization is removed. We are confronting that danger in Iraq, where Saddam holdouts and foreign terrorists are desperately trying to throw Iraq into chaos by attacking our forces, by attacking international aid workers, by attacking innocent Iraqi citizens. They know that the advance of freedom in Iraq would be a major defeat for the cause of terror. This collection of killers and assassins is trying to shake the will of the United States of America. America will never be intimidated by a bunch of thugs.

We are aggressively striking the terrorists in Iraq, defeating them there so we will not have to face them in our own cities. We're calling other nations to help, and they are, because they understand that a free Iraq will make their own countries more secure. We're standing with the brave Iraqi people as they assume more of their own defense and move toward self-government. This isn't easy work, but it is essential work. The United States of America will finish what we have begun, and we will win this essential victory in the war against terror.

Our greatest security comes from the advance of human liberty, because free nations do not support terror, free nations do not attack their neighbors, free nations do not threaten the world with weapons of mass terror. Americans believe that freedom is the deepest need and hope of every human heart. I believe that freedom is the future of every nation, and I know that freedom is not America's gift to the world. Freedom is God's gift to every man and woman who lives in this world.

America also understands that unprecedented influence brings tremendous responsibilities. We have duties in this world, and when we see disease and starvation and hopeless poverty, we will not turn away. And that is why, on the continent of Africa, America is now committed to bringing the healing power of medicine to millions of men and women and children suffering from AIDS.

We face challenges at home, and our actions will prove equal to those challenges. I want everybody working. I worry when someone who wants to work can't find a job. That is why I'm going to continue to push a progrowth, pro-entrepreneurial spirit agenda.

We must make our health care system work better, and that is why we are keeping our commitment to America's seniors by strengthening and modernizing Medicare. For years, seniors have called for a modern Medicare system that provides coverage for prescription drugs and more health care choices. For years, Washington listened but did nothing. Finally, the Congress has acted. I look forward to signing this important piece of legislation. I look forward to signing a piece of legislation that says clearly, when America makes a commitment to our elderly, we will keep that commitment.

For the sake of our health care system, we need to cut down on the frivolous lawsuits which are increasing the cost of medicine. People who have been harmed by a bad doc deserve their day in court. But this system shouldn't reward lawyers who are simply fishing for a rich settlement. Because frivolous lawsuits—frivolous lawsuits drive up the cost of health care, they therefore affect the Federal budget.

Medical liability reform is a national issue which requires a national solution. I submitted a plan to the United States Congress. I want to thank the House of Representatives for passing a good reform bill. It is stuck in the United States Senate. It is time for your Senators from the State of Maryland to understand that no one has ever been healed by a frivolous lawsuit.

I have a responsibility as your President to make sure the judicial system runs well, and I have met that duty. I have nominated superb men and women for the Federal courts, people who will interpret the law, not legislate from the bench. Some Members of the Senate are trying to keep my nominees off the bench by blocking up-or-down votes. Every judicial nominee deserves a fair hearing and an up-or-down vote on the Senate floor. It is time for some of the Members of the United States Senate to stop playing politics with American justice.

The Congress needs to complete work on a comprehensive energy plan. We need to modernize our electricity systems. We need to encourage conservation, promote energy efficiency. We need to develop cleaner technologies to help us find energy in environmentally friendly ways. For the sake of economic security, for the sake of national security, this country must become less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

A strong and prosperous nation must also be a compassionate nation. I will continue to advance what I call compassionate conservatism, which means we'll apply the best and most innovative ideas to the task of helping fellow citizens who hurt. There's still millions of men and women who want to end their dependence on Government and become independent through work. We must continue to advance the successes of the welfare reform program in a decent way, a compassionate way. We must train people for jobs which actually exist. We must bring more work and dignity into the lives of more of our citizens. Congress should complete the "Citizen Service Act" so more Americans can serve their communities and their country.

Both Houses should reach agreement on my Faith-Based Initiative to support the armies of compassion, the armies of compassion that are mentoring children and caring for the homeless and offering hope to the addicted. This great Nation has got all kinds of fabulous religions, Christian, Jewish, and Muslim. And out of that religion comes a universal call for people to help those who suffer, to those who need help. Our Government must understand that some problems are so intractable, the only thing that will matter, the only thing that will help, is for a faith-based program to intercede in their lives. Our country should never fear faith. We should welcome faith into the compassionate delivery of human help.

A compassionate society must promote opportunity for all, including the independence and dignity that come from ownership. This administration will constantly strive to promote an ownership society in America. We want more people owning their own home. There is a minority homeownership gap in America that must be closed, and I've submitted a plan to Congress to do so. We want people to own and manage their own retirement accounts. We want people to own and manage their own health care accounts. We want people—more people to own their own small business. You see, this administration understands that when a person owns something, he or she has a vital stake in the future of our country.

A compassionate society is one in which people respect each other, respect their opinions, respect their religious beliefs. It is a society in which each of us take responsibility for the decisions we make in life. The culture of this country is changing from one that has said, "If it feels good, do it," and, "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else," to a culture in which each of us understands we're responsible for the decisions we make. If you're a mother or a dad, if you're fortunate enough to be a mother or a dad, you're responsible for loving your child with all your heart. If you're worried about the quality of the education in the community in which you live, you're responsible for doing something about it. If you're the CEO—a CEO in corporate America, you're responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees. And in a responsibility society, each of us is responsible for loving our neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourself.

The culture of service is strong in America. It's one of the things that makes this country so great and so unique. There is a willingness for people to serve our country by helping somebody in need. That's a powerful part of the American culture. And it's strong today, and I can tell you why. We started the USA Freedom Corps, and the response has been magnificent. People from all walks of life have signed up to help, to help make this

country strong by helping to save lives. Policemen and firefighters and the people who wear our Nation's uniform are reminding us what it means to sacrifice for something greater than ourselves. Once again, the children of America believe in heroes, because they see them every day.

In these challenging times, the world has seen the resolve and the courage of America. And I've been privileged to see the compassion and the character of the American people. All the tests of the last 3 years have come to the right nation. We're a strong country, and we use the strength to defend the peace. We're an optimistic country, confident in ourselves and in ideals bigger than ourselves. Abroad, we seek to lift whole nations by spreading freedom. At home, we seek to lift up lives by spreading opportunity to every corner of America. This is the work that history has set before us. We welcome it. And we know that for our country, the best days lie ahead.

God bless. Thanks for coming. Glad you all are here. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 12:17 p.m. at the Hyatt Regency Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr., of Maryland and his wife, Kendel; Lt. Gov. Michael Steele of Maryland and his wife, Andrea; Ken Mehlman, campaign manager, Mercer Reynolds, national finance chairman, and Richard E. Hug, Maryland State finance cochairman, Bush-Cheney '04, Inc.; and Sheldon B. Kamins, member, board of directors, Republican Jewish Coalition.

Remarks in a Discussion With Employers and Employees at the Home Depot in Halethorpe, Maryland

December 5, 2003

The President. Thank you all. I left my credit card at home. [*Laughter*] Thanks for having me. I'm honored to be here at a great company. I really appreciate the spirit of the company. I appreciate the fact that this company cares about the people who work here. And that's really what we're here to talk about, is people working and realizing their dream. I want people working in the country.

I want you to know, I'm an optimistic guy for a lot of reasons. I've seen what we've been through. I want to remind you what this country has been through in order to get to where we are today.

First, we were in recession. You know that better than me, what that means. It means fewer people coming in to buy things, as far as you're concerned. And the recession started in 2001, early 2001. We started to come out of the recession a little bit; you probably felt it around the summer of 2001, maybe fall of 2001. And then the enemy hit us, and that hurt.

Again, those of you on the frontlines of the retail business know what I'm talking about. The cash registers weren't ringing quite as much, and people weren't coming through the aisles quite as much. And it hurt us. It hurt the country a lot. It kind of changed our attitude, and it should change your attitude. We should never forget the lessons of September the 11th, 2001. I have an obligation; the Congressmen who are here have an obligation. I want to thank Roscoe Bartlett and Dutch Ruppersberger and Ben Cardin, whose district this is. We have an obligation to do everything we can to keep this country secure, to never forget the lessons of September the 11th, 2001, to find the enemy before they come again, to stay on the offensive, and to bring these killers to justice, which is what we're going to do.

But it hurt our economy when they attacked us, of course. Not only did it change foreign policy—in other words, we can't sit there and pick and choose what threat we deal with. Now that we have become vulnerable, we're going to have deal with the threats before they mature and come upon us. But it hurt our economy. It hurt us pretty bad.

And then we started to recover, and I just wanted to remember another thing we've overcome. Some of the corporate citizens of America forgot what it meant to be a responsible citizen. This guy's a responsible guy. See, some of them didn't tell the truth, though. We had some of our citizens not tell the truth. They forgot what it meant to be a leader, and it hurt the confidence of the people. You might remember that period of time. There were these scandals, and people

began to wonder whether or not there was honesty in the system. By the way, the way you deal with that, of course, is you find them and you put them into jail. Those who lie, cheat, and steal go to jail.

And then, as you know, I made the decision to deal with threats. As we saw, we put the doctrine out that said, "If you harbor a terrorist, you're just as guilty as the terrorists." And the Taliban, we took them down for the sake of our own security and for the sake of the long-suffering people of Afghanistan.

And then I obviously made the decision to go into Iraq—and by the way, a free and peaceful Iraq is in our Nation's interest; it's in our security interest—that affected the economy. When you turned on your TV, it said, "America is marching to war." That's not very conducive for—that's not a very positive statement. It doesn't build a lot of confidence—people, you know, marching to war, why would I want to invest in my home? Or why would I want to come to Home Depot if we're fixing to go to war?

So we've overcome a lot, when you think about it. Today the unemployment rate dropped, as you may know, from 6 percent to 5.9 percent. More workers are going to work. Over 380,000 have joined the workforce in the last couple of months. We've overcome a lot. We're a strong country, a strong economy. A lot of it has to do with the fact that we got the best workers in the world. Our productivity is high. I hope some of it has to do—I know some of it has to do—I hope you understand some of it has to do with the fact that the role of Government can help create growth. See, when a person has more money in their pocket, they're likely to come to Home Depot.

Participant. Right.

The President. If they have less money in their pocket, they may not come here. And so I worked with the Congress—I want to thank Congressman Ehrlich, when he was in the Congress, now Governor Ehrlich. We cut taxes on people. It's your money to begin with, by the way. You've got more money to spend. And when you have more money to spend, it increases demand for a good or a service. And when that demand increases for a good or a service, somebody has to produce it.

And so the tax relief went for everybody, not just the favorite few. Everybody got tax relief. And it helped the economy. It also helped small business. You're going to hear from some entrepreneurs here. And by the way, most new jobs in America are created by small businesses. We're happy to have the Home Depot job, don't get me wrong. [*Laughter*] But the truth is, most new jobs are started by the entrepreneurs. And so you're wondering why we've got small-business owners here, because I want you to hear from them. I want you to hear what it means to have a little more money in your pocket.

Most small businesses pay tax at the individual income tax level. See, these two small businesses do—you're Subchapter S's, which means when the taxes come out, you pay like you're an individual, your business does. Which means when you reduce individual taxes, really what you're doing is you're making a big difference for small businesses across America so that they can grow and hire new people. If small businesses create most new jobs, then it makes sense to reward small businesses for labor and risk by reducing their taxes, which we did.

And we did a couple of other smart things. If you're married, you ought not to be penalized in the Tax Code. It seems like the Tax Code ought to encourage people to be married, not discourage them from being married.

We know how hard it is to raise a child, and therefore, we increased the child credit to $1,000 per child. That helps if you're a mom or a dad. And actually, this summer I remember going—I think it was to Philadelphia, where they were making the checks. I said, "The check is in the mail." After I said it, I felt a little nervous. [*Laughter*] Fortunately, it was in the mail. And so you got the difference between the child credit today and the new child credit of $1,000 per child. That's important—that's important relief. That's part of the money going into your pocket.

We also provided incentives for small businesses to make investment. When small businesses invest in machinery or computer equipment, somebody has to build it, see.

And when somebody builds that machine, somebody is more likely to find work. And so, in other words, we passed a plan that makes sense.

Part of the things you'll hear me talk about is how to continue the growth. I mean, we're growing. This economy is good. It can be better, so more people find work. One of the ways to make sure this economy continues to grow is to make all the tax relief we passed permanent. See, it's about to—it's going to go away in phases. The child credit is going to go back down. The marriage penalty will go back up. Taxes will go back up unless we make this permanent. It doesn't make any sense to have a Tax Code that gyrates like that. You need stability in your Tax Code, particularly for the small-business owners and planners.

So one thing that I want you to take away from here is that if you're interested in job creation and job growth for the future, the tax relief we passed must become permanent.

I want to thank all the local officials who have come, by the way. I know the Lieutenant Governor is here. I want to thank the Members of the House and the Senate. It turns out when a President shows up, all kinds of people come. [*Laughter*] And I want to thank you for being here. It's an honor to be here. I look forward to maybe shaking a couple of hands on the way out and—yes. Pretty soon. Yes, pictures, we'll get a picture. Maybe buy a chainsaw. [*Laughter*]

Participant. We carry your brand. [*Laughter*]

The President. Why don't we start off—we've got a man here who is building homes. One of the interesting things about our policy is that when interest rates go low, it provides incentive for people to buy a home; you know, it pushes mortgages down. We want a lot of people owning homes. We've got a minority homeownership gap in America, by the way, we've got to close. See, we just don't want one segment of our population owning homes. We want everybody owning a home. We want everybody to feel comfortable.

I put a plan up to the Congress to do that, help with downpayments, to make sure the fine print in the contract becomes a little larger so everybody understands what they're signing before they go in. It makes people a little nervous when you—particularly the first-time homebuyer, if you know what I mean. So we've got programs to help educate. We've got programs to simplify the process. We've got programs to help with the downpayment. Low interest rates help.

And our man here, Jim Montgomery, is an owner. He's an entrepreneur. By the way, he is at one of these companies, a Subchapter S, it's called, that pays taxes at the individual rate. So when we cut his taxes individually, we also cut taxes on his business, so he can more likely be able to hire somebody else. He wants to hire and expand. But Jim, welcome. Tell us about your business. Tell us what's on your mind. It's your chance to tell the Governor and Lieutenant Governor if you don't like things here in Maryland. [*Laughter*] If you don't like things at the Federal level, write your Congressman. [*Laughter*]

[*The discussion continued.*]

The President. Yes. Well, that is a tax cut. That was part of it. In other words, when you provide an incentive for somebody to buy equipment—that's what Jim is talking about—it means somebody has to make the equipment or somebody has got to sell the equipment, in your case. And I appreciate you bringing that up, because it's an integral part of the tax plan, to encourage investment. And investment means jobs. And that's what we're really talking about, jobs. See, I'm glad he's building homes. I'm glad people are owning homes, but I'm also glad there's an incentive for him to go out and buy additional equipment. Somebody has got to make that equipment. And when somebody makes that equipment, somebody is working, and that's what we're really talking about. We're talking about the human dignity that comes from people being able to find a job.

Thank you for being an entrepreneur.

James Montgomery. You're welcome.

The President. Yes, I appreciate your spirit. See, one of the great strengths of America is what we call the entrepreneurial spirit. It's a chance for—to create an environment so people like Jim feel comfortable about building their own business. And it's an exciting part of our economy and a vibrant

part, just like the Bell Nursery folks here. We've got an owner; we've got a regional manager. Tell us about your business, Gary.

[*The discussion continued.*]

The President. A couple of points she made. One of the things that's interesting, low interest rates allow people to refinance their homes. You all know better than a lot the effects of refinancing. I mean, people refinance, come in with a little cash, it gives them a chance to remodel.

Secondly, I do want to mention a couple of things that are important for small businesses. One, health care, it's important for large businesses, really important for small businesses. It's difficult for a small business to provide health care, because they don't have any purchasing power. What we need to do is allow small businesses to accumulate purchasing power. It's called associated health care plans. If you've got more people demanding, it means you can reduce the price. We need the associated health care plans.

Another thing that affects all business, by the way, but especially hurts small businesses, are excessive regulations. I mean, if you've got four employees, you don't want to be spending a lot of time filling out paperwork. The Governor, I know, is working hard to reduce excessive paperwork at the State level. We're doing so at the Federal level. Look, I readily concede we've got a lot more to do. There's a lot of paperwork, a lot of regulation.

Another thing that's a problem is lawsuits. They get to be a problem on these small-business owners and large-business owners. Medical liability reform is an issue we need. I'll tell you why. They're driving up the cost of your medicine, and it's making fewer doctors practice medicine. Medicine ought to be affordable and ought to be available. And these lawsuits—everybody ought to be able to sue, don't get me wrong. We just don't want the junk lawsuits and the frivolous lawsuits and the lawyers who are simply fishing for a rich settlement to be prevalent.

Anyway, I'm interested in hearing how this great company works. Obviously, I heard the enthusiasm—[*laughter*]—when I was coming in. But John, why don't you start off, and then you can introduce your fellow workers.

[*The discussion continued.*]

The President. Let me ask you a question. So what's your feel? You're hearing from people when they're coming through, shopping, and——

John Ferraiuolo. I've got to tell you, our business in this store, this year, is about 18 percent better than last year. So where last year things were a little bit of a struggle—I think the enthusiasm and interest in people, the confidence level as people came in shopping wasn't quite there—people are now going from last year, I think, doing projects that were maybe necessities, I see people doing a little dreaming again and wanting to step themselves up and move forward and doing some wanting in their purchasing as opposed to just necessities.

The President. That's good, yes. John, by the way—he probably doesn't want me to tell you this, but I'm going to tell you anyway. He got $1,200 of tax relief as a result of the tax reductions. Probably considered a fair amount of money, I would guess.

Mr. Ferraiuolo. That's an awfully great amount of money. What happened there, I think last year—a few months ago, when my wife came home, she found a check in the mail, and you know what——

The President. Thank goodness. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Ferraiuolo. I'm going to—basically, she said, "Sign here. I'll do it for you."

The President. That's right. Yes. [*Laughter*]

Mr. Ferraiuolo. And then she went shopping, and she took the chance to buy herself a few treats. And I think with the rest of it, one of the things I've been able to do is up my 401(k) contributions——

The President. That's good.

Mr. Ferraiuolo. ——as opposed to—so I keep a little bit more of that money for my future.

The President. That's wonderful.

Brandy, you're a manager, store manager. Tell us your history here, and——

[*The discussion continued.*]

The President. One of the things I like to talk about is the need for us to be a responsible society; people take responsibility for the decisions they make in life; people take responsibility—people seize opportunity. The thing I like about Jessica's story is she's willing to seize an opportunity. If you notice, she came looking, she worked hard to find a position, and now she's found a company that is doing its responsibility—in other words, helping people realize their dreams. And that's a very important part of corporate America. It's one of the reasons I like Bob, is he understands that, see.

One of the things that this company does is it provides volunteer time and encourages people to help—love your neighbor like you'd like to be loved yourself. One of the things about America is—look, we've just gone through an interesting story, that says to me that things look pretty good for the economy, and we've been through a lot. In other words, it's a fabulous country, because we'll handle every challenge put in front of us, every challenge, because we've got wonderful people.

The strength of this country, though, is not our military, although we'll keep it strong. It's strong. It needs to stay strong and will. It's not a—thank you, sir. And by the way, thanks for supporting the military. And if you've got a loved one over there, you tell them the Commander in Chief is incredibly proud, proud of what they're doing.

Participant. They're right out there.

The President. Where?

Participant. This young man right here.

The President. Thank you for your service. I appreciate you, thanks.

Participant. He just came home.

The President. Yes. That's great. It's not—strength is not our military. It's not our wallet. It's the heart and soul of the American people. That's the strength. And the fact that this company is willing to say, you know, "Follow your heart and go help somebody who hurts," is an important part of keeping this country strong. It really is. The fact that people are willing to hear the universal call to love a neighbor like you'd like to be loved yourself is really an important part of this Nation. And it's a vital part of the Nation. So for those of you who are dreaming big dreams and working for them, like Jessica is, thanks for doing that—like our business owners—I appreciate that. It's important that you dream big dreams and work hard.

For those of you who are helping people realize their dreams, I thank you as well. It's just an incredibly vital part of a bright future for our country. There's nothing America can't achieve—nothing we can't achieve. You know why? Because this country is full of fabulous people. It's my honor to be with a lot of them here today.

Thank you for coming. God bless. Thank you for your time.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:20 p.m. at the Lansdowne Home Depot. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Robert L. Ehrlich, Jr., and Lt. Gov. Michael Steele of Maryland; James Montgomery, owner, James S. Montgomery & Sons; Gary Mangum, co-owner, and Alison Anderson, regional manager, Bell Nursery; John Ferraiuolo, store manager, and Jessica Adamson, paint associate, Lansdowne Home Depot; Brandy Foble, store manager, Ellicott City Home Depot; and Robert Nardelli, chairman, president, and chief executive officer, The Home Depot, Inc.

Statement Announcing the Appointment of James A. Baker III as the President's Personal Envoy on Iraqi Debt Resolution

December 5, 2003

Iraq is moving toward freedom, stability, and prosperity. In order to support this effort, I am pleased to announce today that in response to a request from the Iraqi Governing Council for assistance, I have appointed James A. Baker III to be my personal envoy on the issue of Iraqi debt. Secretary Baker will report directly to me and will lead an effort to work with the world's Governments at the highest levels with international organizations and with the Iraqis in seeking the restructuring and reduction of Iraq's official debt. The future of the Iraqi people should not be mortgaged to the enormous burden of debt incurred to enrich Saddam Hussein's regime. This debt endangers Iraq's long-term prospects for political health and economic prosperity. The issue of Iraq debt must be resolved in a manner that is fair and

that does not unjustly burden a struggling nation at its moment of hope and promise. James Baker's vast economic, political, and diplomatic experience as a former Secretary of State and Secretary of the Treasury will help to forge an international consensus for an equitable and effective resolution of this issue.

Digest of Other White House Announcements

The following list includes the President's public schedule and other items of general interest announced by the Office of the Press Secretary and not included elsewhere in this issue.

November 29

In the morning, at the Bush Ranch in Crawford, TX, the President had an intelligence briefing.

November 30

In the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Bush returned to Washington, DC.

December 1

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he traveled to Detroit, MI, where, upon arrival, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer Bradley Simmons. He then traveled to Dearborn, MI.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Canton, MI. Later, he traveled to Newark, NJ, where, upon arrival, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer Patricia Fields. He then traveled to Whippany, NJ.

In the evening, the President returned to Washington, DC.

The President announced his intention to nominate M. Teel Bivins to be Ambassador to Sweden.

December 2

In the morning, the President had a telephone conversation with President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt to discuss peace efforts in the Middle East and the situation in Iraq. Later, he had an intelligence briefing.

Later in the morning, the President traveled to Pittsburgh, PA, where, upon arrival, he met with USA Freedom Corps volunteer Mila Nguyen.

In the afternoon, the President returned to Washington, DC.

During the day, the President informed Robert L. Bartley that he would receive the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

December 3

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing.

In the afternoon, in an Oval Office ceremony, the President signed the 21st Century Nanotechnology Research and Development Act. Later, he met with the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology.

In the evening, on the State Floor, the President hosted a holiday reception.

The White House announced that the President will meet with King Abdullah II of Jordan at the White House on December 4.

The President announced his intention to nominate B. Francis Saul II and Ruth Sharp Altshuler to be members of the Library of Congress Trust Fund Board.

The President announced his intention to appoint Arturo Duran as Commissioner of the U.S. Section of the International Boundary and Water Commission, United States and Mexico.

The President announced his intention to appoint Victor Rodriguez and Bray Bruce Barnes as members of the Coordinating Council on Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

December 4

In the morning, the President had an intelligence briefing. Later, he had a telephone conversation with Prime Minister Tony Blair of the United Kingdom to discuss the situation in Iraq and the NATO Alliance.

In the afternoon, in an Oval Office ceremony, the President received diplomatic credentials from Ambassadors Eva Nowotny of Austria, Feturi Elisaia of Samoa, Euripides L. Evriviades of Cyprus, Abdulaziz Kamilov of Uzbekistan, Said Tayeb Jawad of Afghanistan, Salvador Stadthagen of Nicaragua,

Bayney Karran of Guyana, and Mikhailo Reznyk of Ukraine.

Later in the afternoon, the President and Mrs. Bush attended the Pageant of Peace on the Ellipse.

December 5

In the morning, the President had a telephone conversation with President Mireya Elisa Moscoso of Panama to discuss a possible Panama-U.S. free trade agreement. Later, he had an intelligence briefing.

Later in the morning, the President traveled to Baltimore, MD.

In the afternoon, the President traveled to Halethorpe, MD. Later, he returned to Washington, DC.

Later in the afternoon, the President participated in an interview with People magazine.

In the evening, the President hosted a holiday reception.

The White House announced the members of the President's Task Force on Puerto Rico's Status: Gilbert G. Gonzalez, Jr.; Elizabeth Dial; Victor E. Bernson, Jr.; Kathleen Leos; Theresa Speake; Regina Schofield; Joshua Filler; Frank Jimenez; David P. Smith; Noel J. Francisco; Chris Spear; Leo DiBenigno; Sam Reid; Tony Fratto; William McLemore; and Ruben Barrales.

Nominations Submitted to the Senate

NOTE: No nominations were submitted to the Senate during the period covered by this issue.

Checklist of White House Press Releases

The following list contains releases of the Office of the Press Secretary that are neither printed as items nor covered by entries in the Digest of Other White House Announcements.

Released December 1

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Scott McClellan

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed S.J. Res. 18, S.J. Res. 22, S. 1066, and H.R. 2754

Released December 2

Transcript of a press gaggle by Press Secretary Scott McClellan

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed S. 1590

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed S. 254, S. 867, S. 1718, and H.R. 3182

Released December 3

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Scott McClellan

Statement by the Press Secretary: King Abdullah of Jordan To Visit Washington

Statement by the Press Secretary on the President's decision to award the Presidential Medal of Freedom to Robert L. Bartley and the text of the citation

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 1904

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 23, H.R. 2744, H.R. 3175, H.R. 3379, S. 117, S. 286, S. 650, S. 189, H.R. 1683, H.R. 1685, S. 1720, and S. 1824

Fact sheet: President Bush Signs Healthy Forests Restoration Act Into Law

Fact sheet: President Bush Signs the 21st Century Nanotechnology Research and Development Act

Released December 4

Transcript of a press briefing by Press Secretary Scott McClellan

Transcript of a press briefing by U.S. Trade Representative Robert B. Zoellick on ending the temporary steel safeguards

Statement by the Press Secretary announcing that the President signed H.R. 2622

Fact sheet: President Bush Signs the Fair and Accurate Credit Transactions Act of 2003

Fact sheet: The Presidential Determination on Steel

Released December 5

Statement by the Press Secretary: Terrorist Act in Yessentuki, Stavropol Region, Russia, on December 5

Announcement of the membership of the President's Task Force on Puerto Rico's Status

Fact sheet: 57,000 Americans Find Work in November: Unemployment Rate Drops Below 6%

Acts Approved by the President

Approved December 1

H.R. 2754 / Public Law 108–137
Energy and Water Development Appropriations Act, 2004

S. 1066 / Public Law 108–138
To correct a technical error from Unit T–07 of the John H. Chafee Coastal Barrier Resources System

S.J. Res. 18 / Public Law 108–139
Commending the Inspectors General for their efforts to prevent and detect waste, fraud, abuse, and mismanagement, and to promote economy, efficiency, and effectiveness in the Federal Government during the past 25 years

S.J. Res. 22 / Public Law 108–140
Recognizing the Agricultural Research Service of the Department of Agriculture for 50 years of outstanding service to the Nation through agricultural research

S. 1590 / Public Law 108–141
To redesignate the facility of the United States Postal Service, located at 315 Empire Boulevard in Crown Heights, Brooklyn, New York, as the "James E. Davis Post Office Building"

Approved December 2

S. 254 / Public Law 108–142
Kaloko-Honokohau National Historical Park Addition Act of 2003

S. 867 / Public Law 108–143
To designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 710 Wicks Lane in Billings, Montana, as the "Ronald Reagan Post Office Building"

S. 1718 / Public Law 108–144
To designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 3710 West 73rd Terrace in Prairie Village, Kansas, as the "Senator James B. Pearson Post Office"

H.R. 3182 / Public Law 108–145
Adoption Promotion Act of 2003

Approved December 3

H.R. 23 / Public Law 108–146
Tornado Shelters Act

H.R. 1683 / Public Law 108–147
Veterans' Compensation Cost-of-Living Adjustment Act of 2003

H.R. 1904 / Public Law 108–148
Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003

H.R. 2744 / Public Law 108–149
To designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 514 17th Street in Moline, Illinois, as the "David Bybee Post Office Building"

H.R. 3175 / Public Law 108–150
To designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 2650 Cleveland Avenue, NW in Canton, Ohio, as the "Richard D. Watkins Post Office Building"

H.R. 3379 / Public Law 108–151
To designate the facility of the United States Postal Service located at 3210 East 10th Street in Bloomington, Indiana, as the "Francis X. McCloskey Post Office Building"

S. 117 / Public Law 108–152
Florida National Forest Land Management Act of 2003

S. 189 / Public Law 108–153
21st Century Nanotechnology Research and Development Act

S. 286 / Public Law 108–154
Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities Prevention Act of 2003

S. 650 / Public Law 108–155
Pediatric Research Equity Act of 2003

S. 1685 / Public Law 108–156
Basic Pilot Program Extension and Expansion Act of 2003

S. 1720 / Public Law 108–157
To provide for Federal court proceedings in Plano, Texas

S. 1824 / Public Law 108–158
Overseas Private Investment Corporation Amendments Act of 2003

Approved December 4

H.R. 2622 / Public Law 108–159
Fair and Accurate Credit Transactions Act of 2003

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